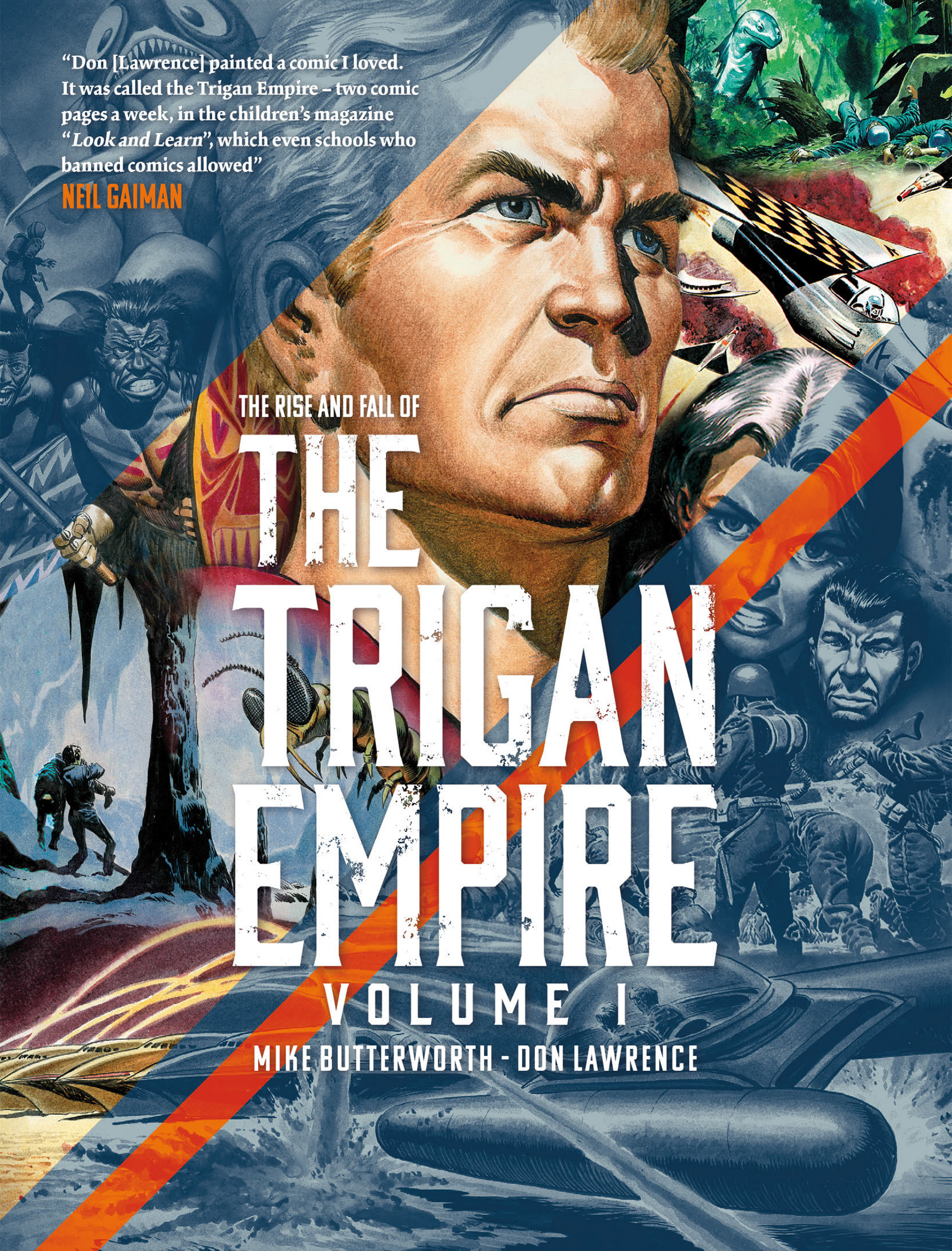

"Don [Lawrence] painted a comic I loved. It was called the Trigan Empire – two comic pages a week, in the children's magazine "*Look and Learn*", which even schools who banned comics allowed"

NEIL GAIMAN

THE RISE AND FALL OF

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

VOLUME I

MIKE BUTTERWORTH - DON LAWRENCE

THE RISE AND FALL OF

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

WRITER
MIKE BUTTERWORTH
ARTIST
DON LAWRENCE

VOLUME I

MIKE BUTTERWORTH
Writer

DON LAWRENCE
Artist

THE DON LAWRENCE COLLECTION STUDIO
Letters

PYE PARR
Design

Thanks to:
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INTRODUCTION

It would have been around 1976 or '77, I was 8 or 9 years old. Park Farm is a small shopping centre in the 60's-built suburb of the city of Derby called Allestree. My parents would walk my sister and I through it on our way to school, and we would pass the small library by the main road, that still exists as part of that concrete complex. After school, sometimes, we would be deposited in there so important grown-up tasks, involving plastic bags and food, could be completed un-encumbered. In an open space near the window at the front, as I recall it, there was a low table, on which sat a collection of the largely forgotten children's weekly '**Look and Learn**' magazine from Fleetway. It was a wholesome publication full of informative illustrated articles on... well, it could have been anything! I barely recall them. But there's a reason for that, and it's the reason I became obsessed with finding every copy they had. The magazine featured a double page spread in full, hand-painted colour, called '*The Trigan Empire*', and it was the most astonishing art I had ever seen.

If comics are modern mythology, that was when I became an archeologist. The picture was incomplete. I did not know, then, who the artist was. I did not have anything near a complete picture as to what this 'Empire' was. There was a leader called Trigo, that much was certain. The clothes they all wore seemed largely to be Romanesque, and classical, but this was not *our* world. There were people with blue skin, and creatures and technology I did not recognize. I did my best to try and put the collection they had in order, and to make sense of it, but in those half-hour windows of time my efforts were futile. There were, I noticed, other artists that drew the story too, but one stood out for me. That was the work that resonated, that utterly captivated me.

I could not have known it was the beginning of a relationship – at first with the art, and later with the man – that would eventually profoundly shape my career and the rest of my life.

Not long after that we moved, and the library was no longer available to me, but somehow I managed to acquire a few copies of a short-lived, glossy comic called '**Vulcan**', which had been cancelled in 1976 after only a year. It, too, contained stories from '*The Trigan Empire*', and featured one involving a furry giant on the nearby moon eating the protagonists. The jagged teeth outlined against a sky as the heroes were swallowed remains etched in my memory, but it would be a few more years before I would discover what befell them. Regardless, I would copy in pencil the faces of Janno, Keren and Trigo. Whilst still only meager pickings I knew I was looking at something extraordinary – an elevation of the medium. This was art.

At school my own art was marking me out, and eventually it led to a scholarship at a boarding school in Eastbourne called St. Andrew's – the first scholarship of its kind. Comics were not allowed there, but my parents were adamant. I wanted to draw comics, and so should be allowed to read them. The rules, necessarily, were relaxed, and eventually changed. A small, but important contribution to that culture!

(It's astonishing to me now that there prevailed a very real prejudice against the medium, echoes of which persist in a form of snobbery. Comics, as with all mediums, can be sublime and enlightening. I liken the missing of the experience of comics to living in a world without film, or books, or music. But I digress!)

While I was away at school my parents fell on harder times, moving to the High Peak on the borders of Derbyshire and Cheshire. It was on one of my holidays at home that I stumbled across the huge Hamlin collection of '*The Trigan Empire*' in WHSmith's in Stockport. It was like a lightening strike! I would often spend an hour or more in bookshops looking for obscure illustrated titles that, it seemed, nobody else wanted. I was, I now realize, discovering and becoming part of a counter-culture of keen enthusiasts, but back then it was an entirely solo pursuit.

I realized immediately that I could finally find out – at last! - who these people were, and what their history was. I felt like I *was* Richard Peter Haddon, the man at the beginning of the story, who labored to translate '*The Rise and Fall of The Trigan Empire*' – those enigmatic tomes discovered with the twelve-feet-tall frozen and preserved bodies of the alien astronauts in the crashed ship. I was elated, and begged my mum to buy the book for me – a big ask, because it wasn't cheap! Fortune was kind, though, and it being the last copy we got it for a song and a prayer.

Don Lawrence and Mike Butterworth (there were other creators, but for me at least the book belongs to them) created a masterpiece together. Mike wrote a vast, hokey and imaginative adventure splicing a multitude of cultures together and adding new and alien ones to the mix. But Don Lawrence is the towering genius here. His contribution is so committed to excellence, and realizing the story's vision in a way both believable and cinematic. Don never cuts corners, and the quality never drops. At the time he was painting in inks, and you can see the influence of '*Dan Dare*' artist Frank Hampson and more so '*Heros the Spartan*' artist Frank Bellamy. But Don drops the underlying black and white base art, taking it to an entirely painted finish, more closely associated with straight-up illustration work. It has gravity, it has atmosphere, and it breathes. The same story, in less talented hands, could have seemed preposterous and utterly unbelievable. Don's contribution made it mesmeric and absorbing. Slight characterizations become rich. The superficial becomes seminal. We end up believing in characters that somehow pull themselves out of a nomadic and primitive existence, build a city on five peaks that rivals Rome in scale and architectural achievement, and construct rockets that take them into space – all in little more than a decade, and yet we buy it! And we buy it solely because of Don's incredible art.

In time I would go on to meet my hero, Don Lawrence, and to work with him and grow to love him. I would become dear friends with his other apprentice Chris Weston, an amazing artist in his own right. Don's work would challenge and inspire me throughout the decades to come, and still does to this day. He will forever be standing behind me, casting a wise and critical eye over my efforts, questioning my choices, and pushing me always to be committed, to strive harder, and to do my best to respect and elevate every job I ever do. But that's another story.

For now, enjoy this book. Tell your friends about it. Buy a copy for them, and insist they do the same for their friends. '*The Trigan Empire*' should be on the bookshelves of every person who ever loved adventure stories, and should be remembered as the seminal and legendary work it truly is.

Liam Sharp
June 7th 2019

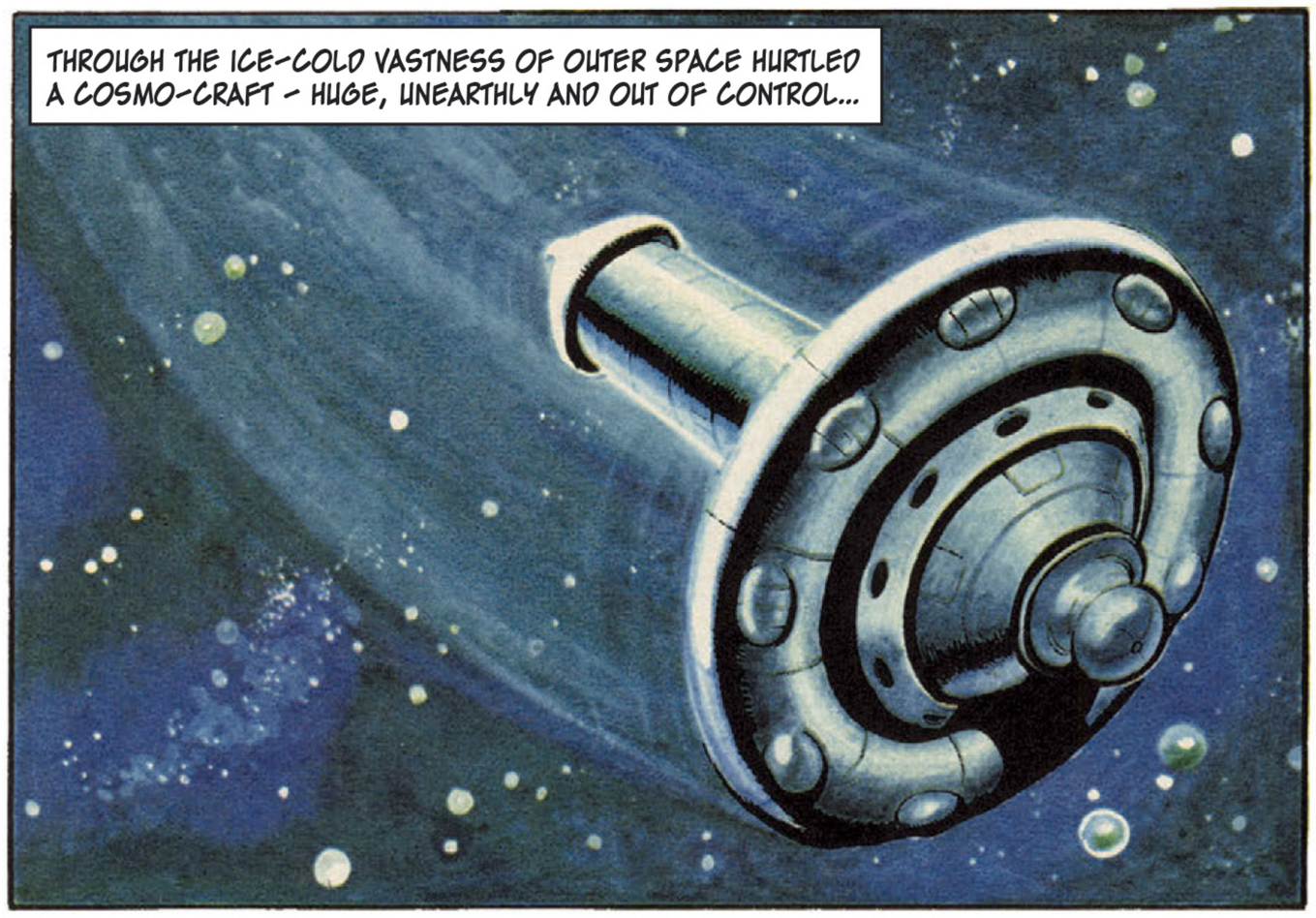
I

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

VICTORY FOR THE TRIGANS

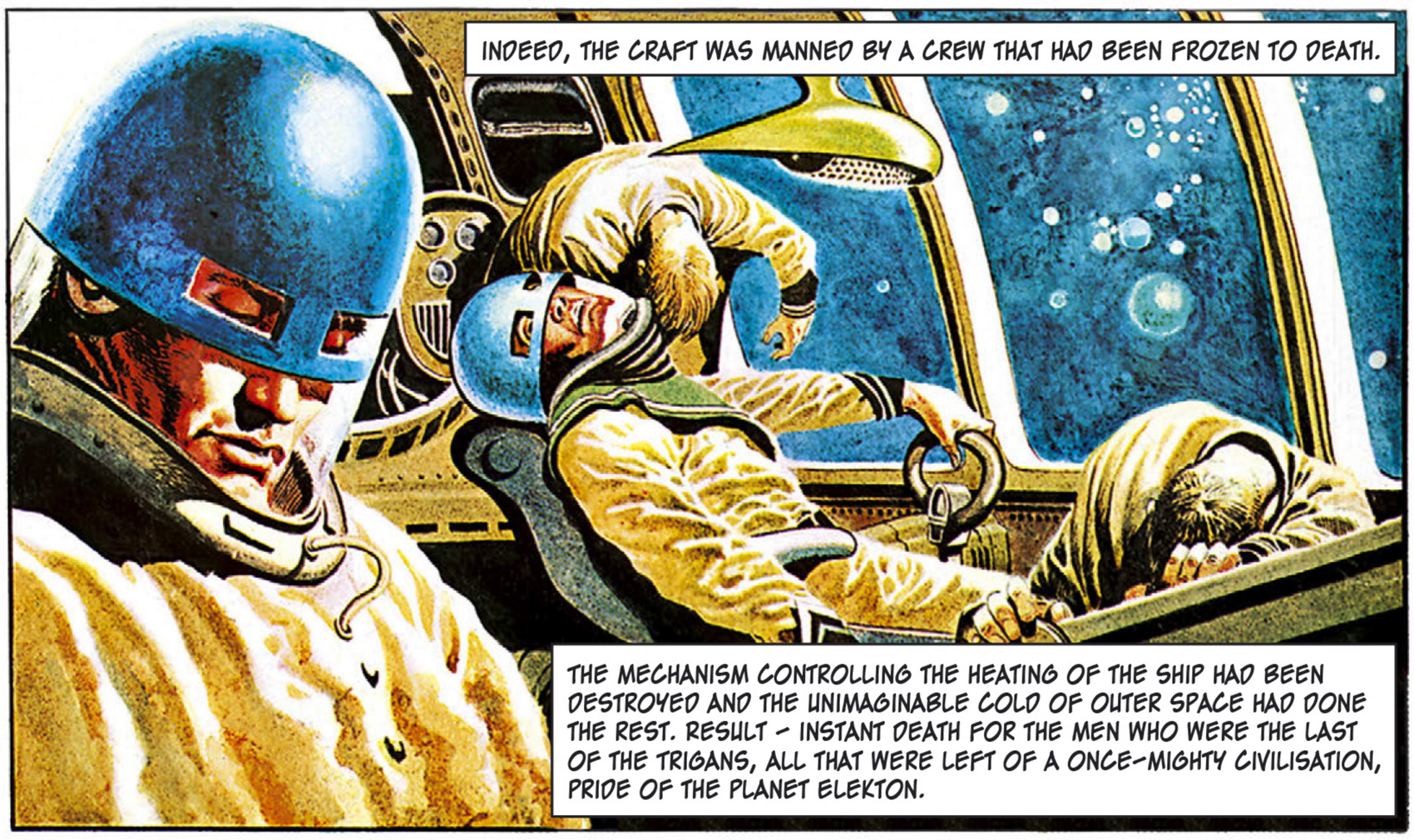
Originally published in ***Ranger***

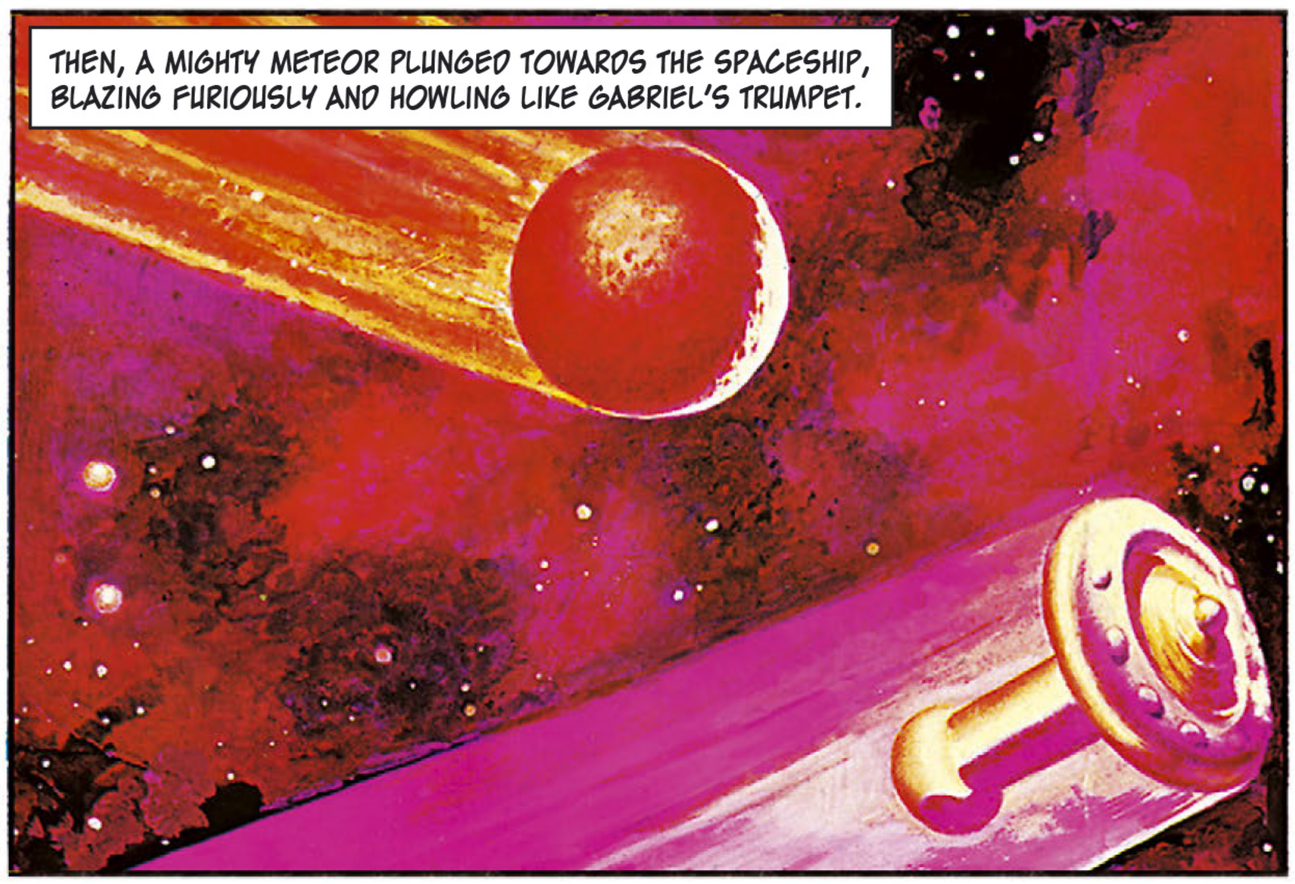
18th September 1965 – 29th January 1966

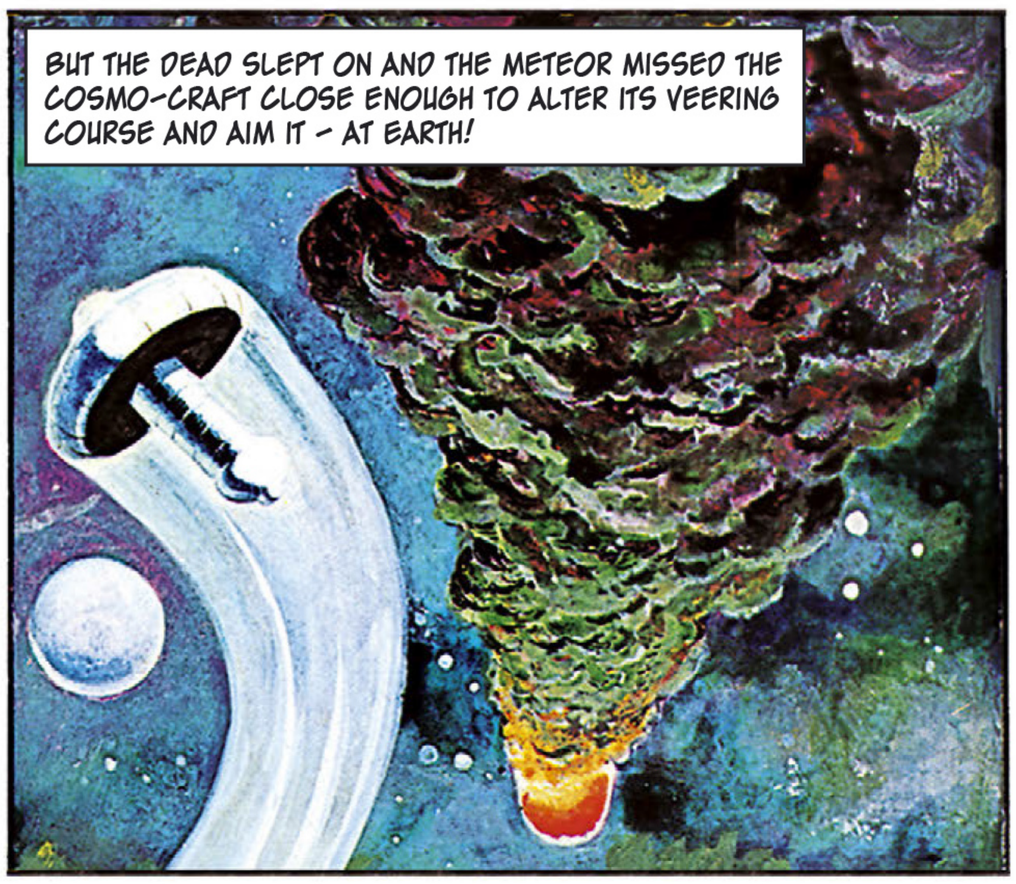

THROUGH THE ICE-COLD VASTNESS OF OUTER SPACE HURTLED A COSMO-CRAFT - HUGE, UNEARTHLY AND OUT OF CONTROL...

...OUT OF CONTROL - AS IT HAD BEEN FOR EIGHT BILLION MILES, SEE-SAWING WILDLY.

...OUT OF CONTROL FOR THE MOST FINAL OF ALL REASONS - THERE WAS A DEAD HAND ON THE ASTRO-HELM!


INDEED, THE CRAFT WAS MANNED BY A CREW THAT HAD BEEN FROZEN TO DEATH.
THE MECHANISM CONTROLLING THE HEATING OF THE SHIP HAD BEEN DESTROYED AND THE UNIMAGINABLE COLD OF OUTER SPACE HAD DONE THE REST. RESULT - INSTANT DEATH FOR THE MEN WHO WERE THE LAST OF THE TRIGANS, ALL THAT WERE LEFT OF A ONCE-MIGHTY CIVILISATION, PRIDE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON.


THEN, A MIGHTY METEOR PLUNGED TOWARDS THE SPACESHIP, BLAZING FURIOUSLY AND HOWLING LIKE GABRIEL'S TRUMPET.


BUT THE DEAD SLEPT ON AND THE METEOR MISSED THE COSMO-CRAFT CLOSE ENOUGH TO ALTER ITS VEERING COURSE AND AIM IT - AT EARTH!

A BOY AND HIS FATHER WERE FISHING IN THE SWAMPS OF FLORIDA IN A SHALLOW-BOTTOMED BOAT TWO DAYS LATER. IT WAS A HOT, SUNNY, PEACEFUL AFTERNOON.

WHEN SUDDENLY...

GOSH, DAD. LOOK!

FATHER AND SON COWERED IN STARK FRIGHT AS FROM OUT OF THE SKY DROPPED THE GIGANTIC COSMO-CRAFT.

THE NEXT INSTANT...

AS THE SLIMY GREEN WATERS SUBSIDED...

WORD OF THE CRASHED COSMO-CRAFT FLASHED TO THE CORNERS OF THE WORLD...

世界上空前未有的大事

SPEAK

ALL ABOARD DEAD

INCREDIBLE...!!

AMAZING!

BOOKS & SPACE CHARTS RECOVERED INTACT

WILL THEY SOLVE GREAT MYSTERY?

FANTASTIQUE!

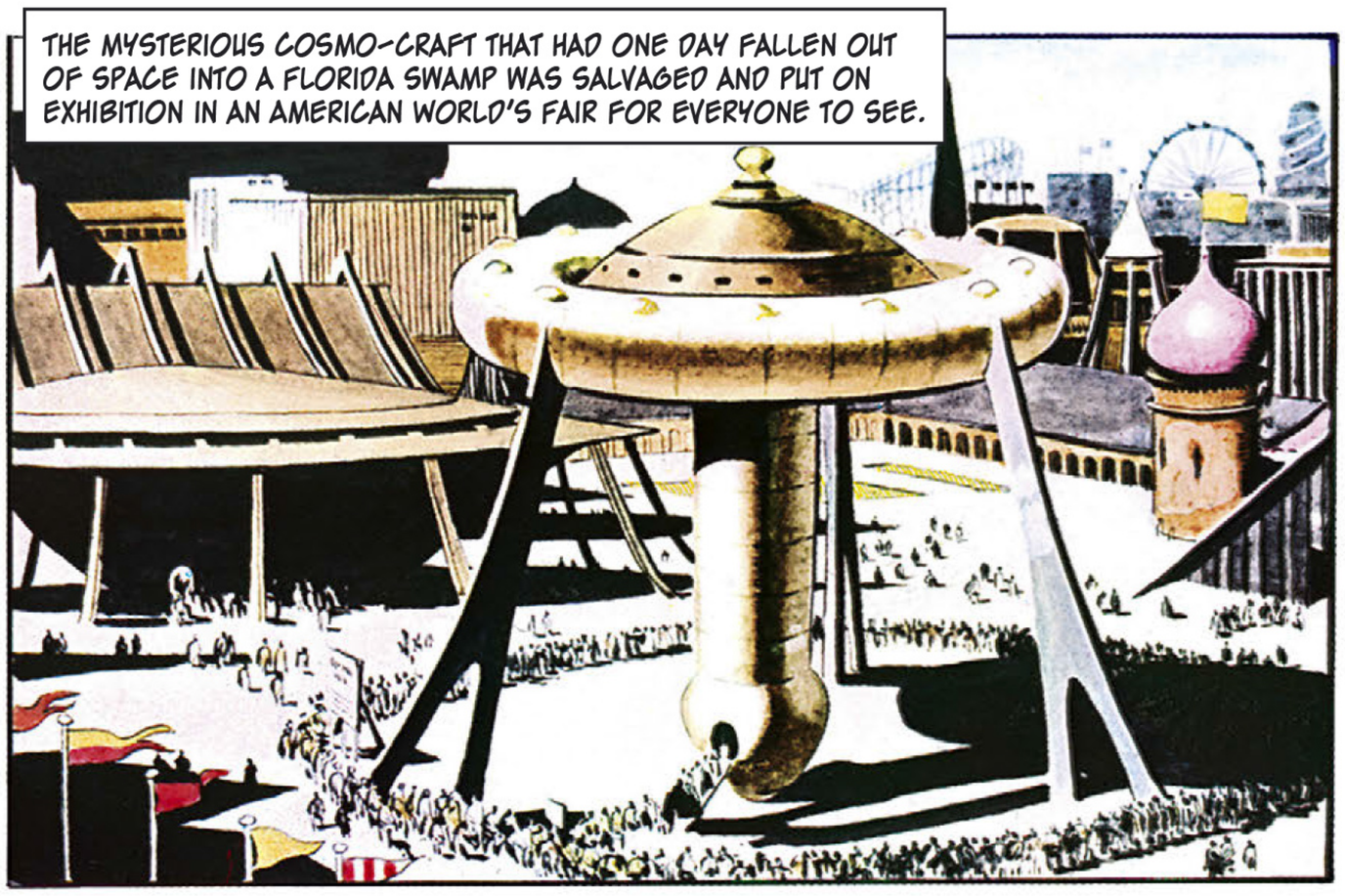
WAS IST DAS?!

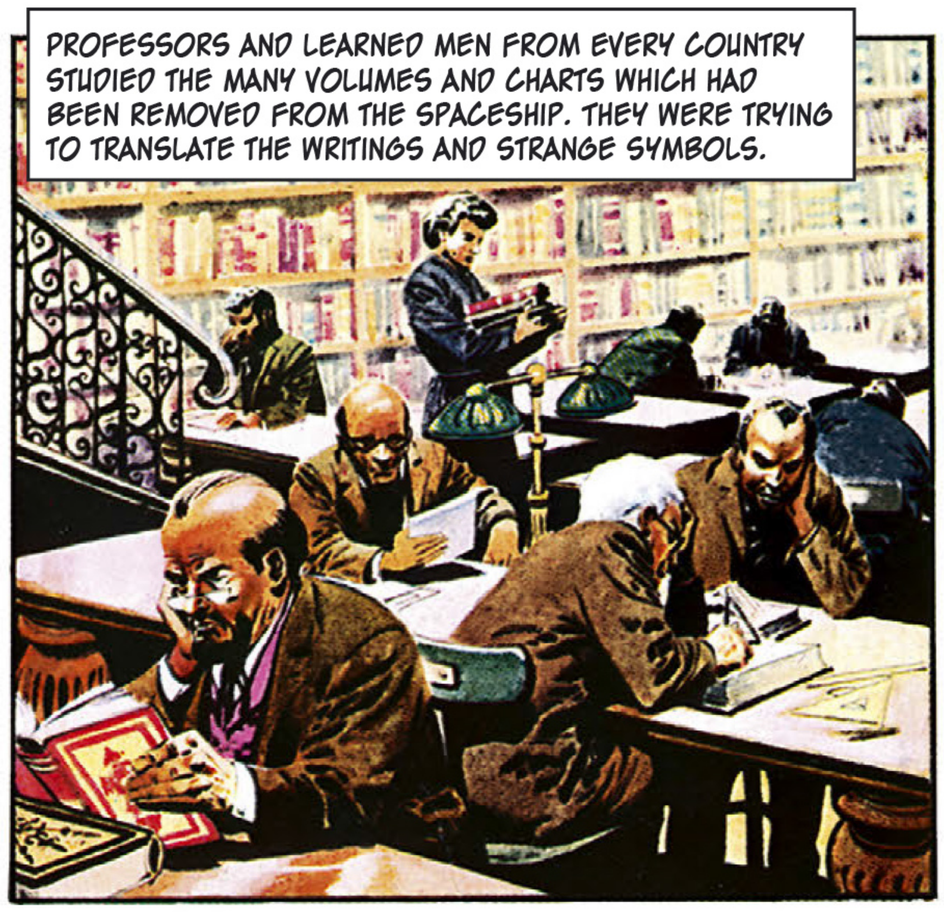
PBC

कया

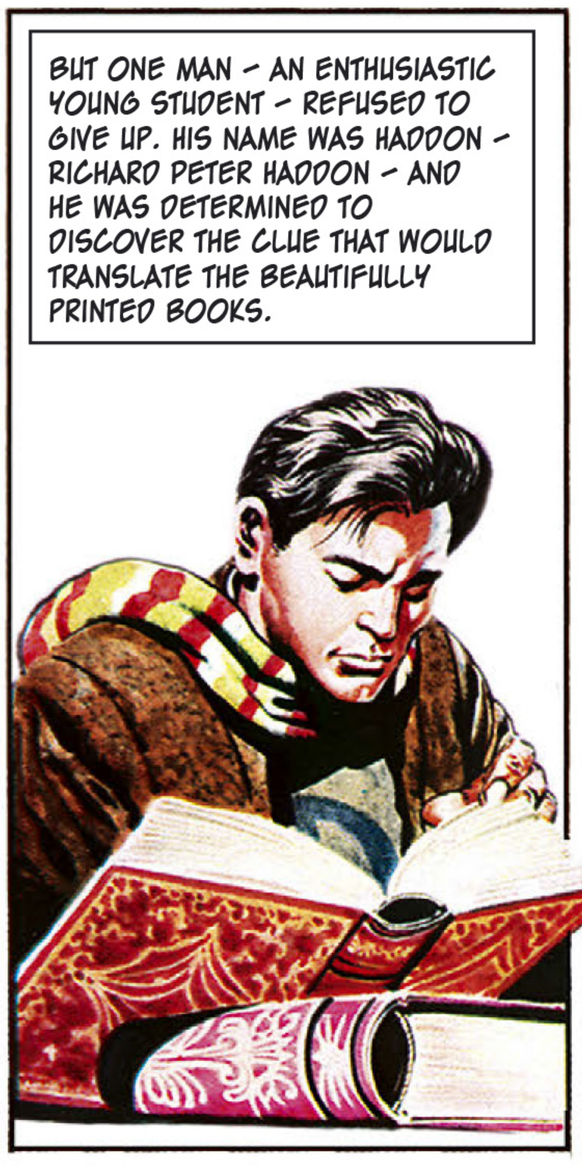
IRON CURTAIN COUNTRIES DENY ALL KNOWLEDGE

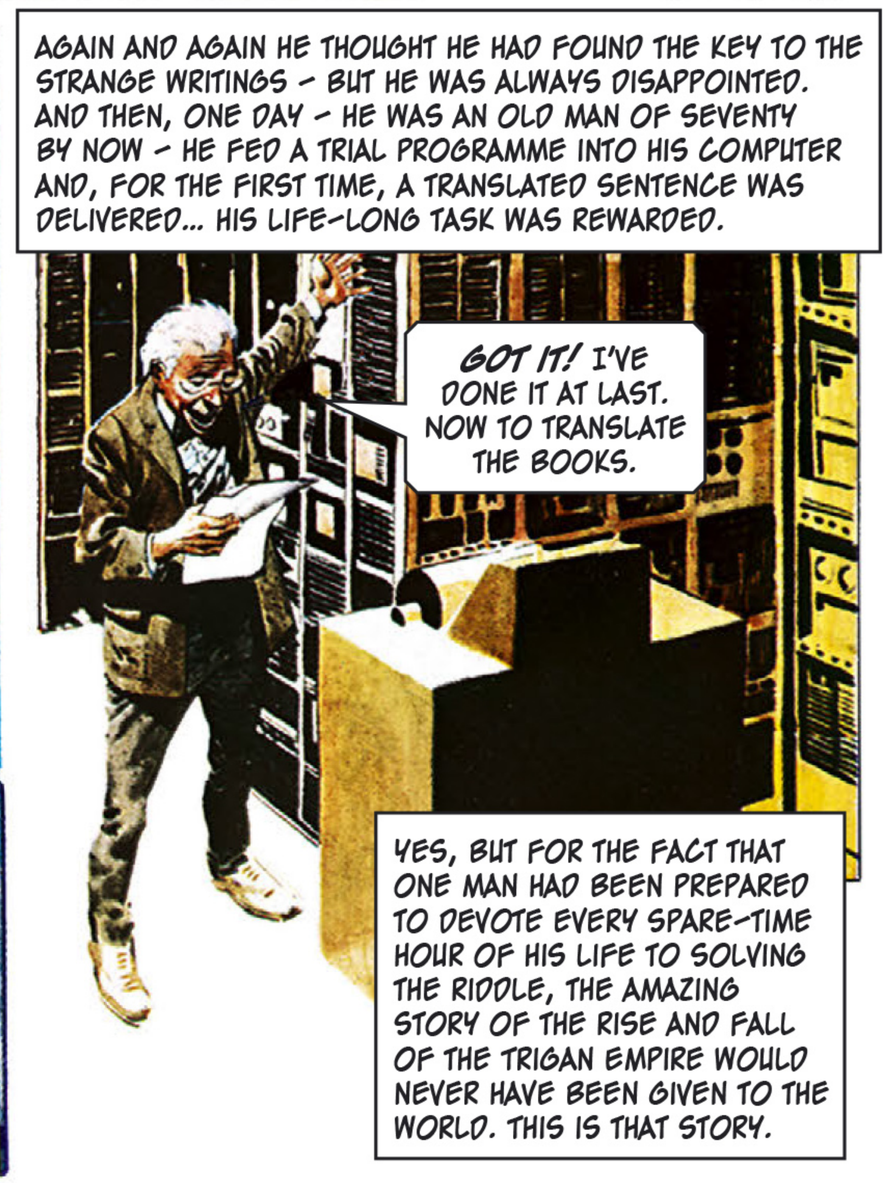
ONGELOFELIJK!

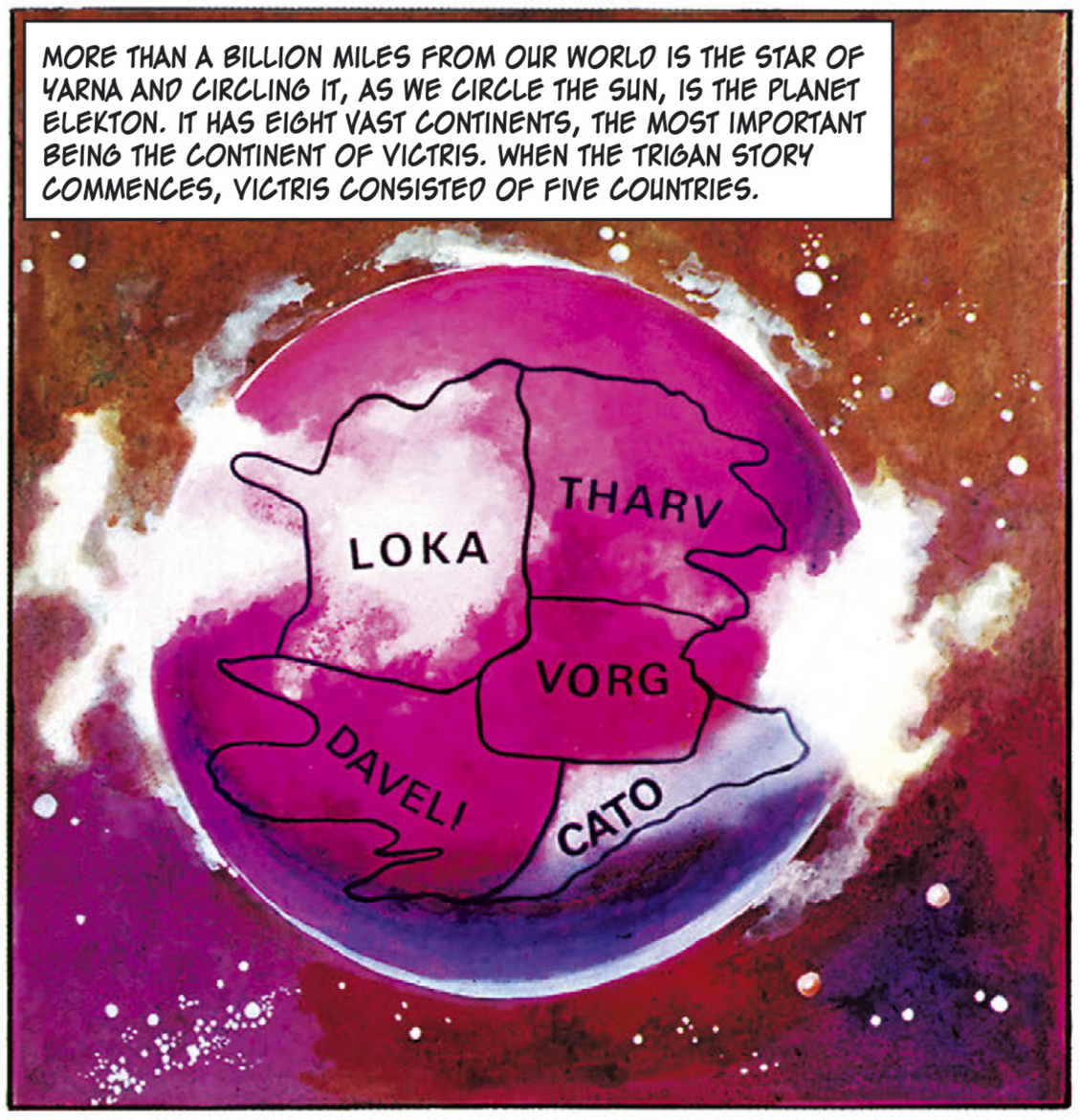




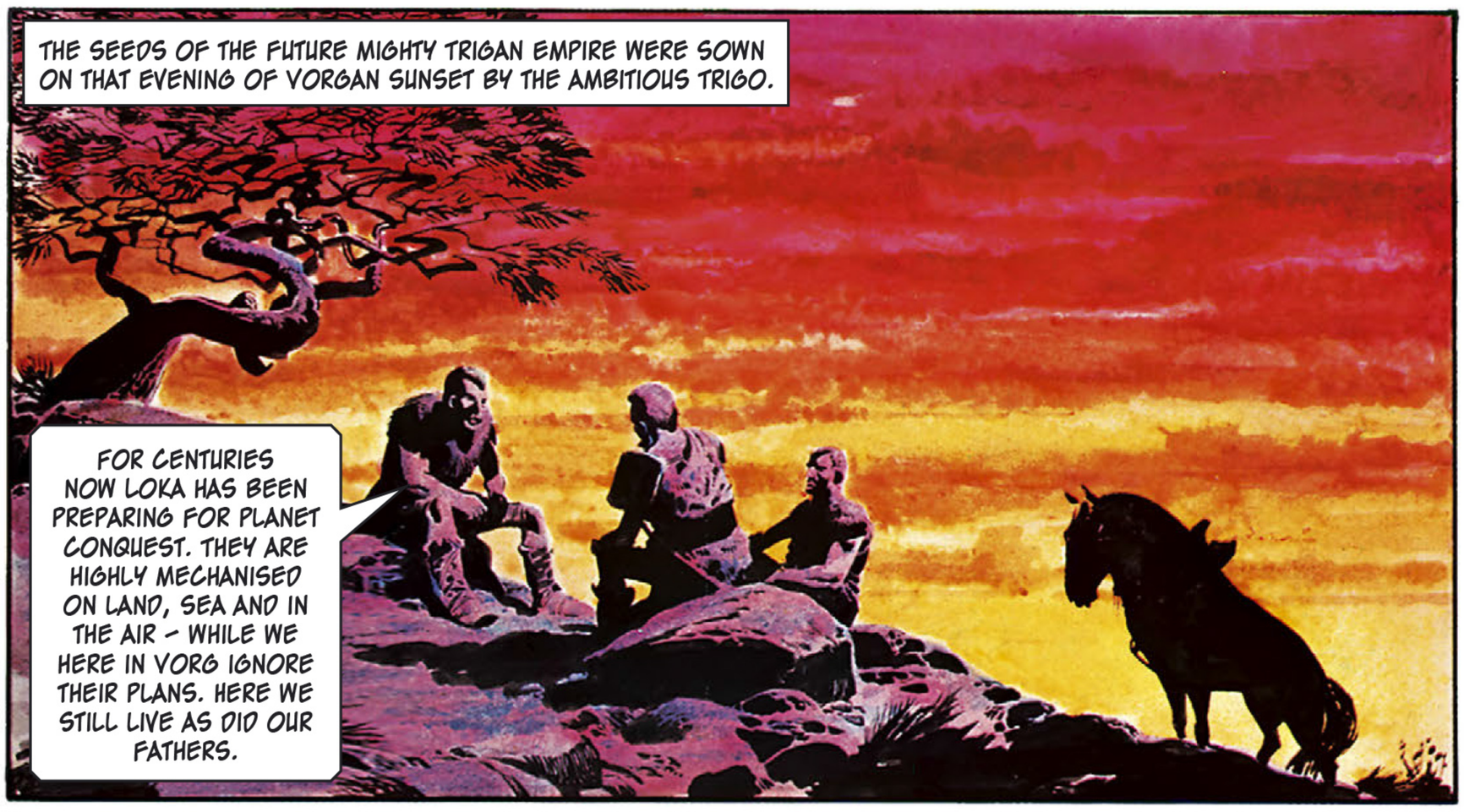
YET, WHEN ALL HAD BEEN SEEN, STUDIED, TAKEN APART AND PUT TOGETHER AGAIN, NOTHING MORE WAS KNOWN THAN WHEN THE COSMO-CRAFT HAD FIRST BEEN TAKEN FROM THE SWAMP. ITS MECHANISM, ITS FUEL, ITS INSTRUMENTS, THE LANGUAGE OF ITS DEAD CREW – EVERYTHING BAFFLED THE EXPERTS. AT LAST THEY ALL GAVE UP THEIR EFFORTS AND TURNED TO OTHER AND SIMPLER MATTERS SUCH AS DESIGNING AND BUILDING MANNED MARS ROCKETS.





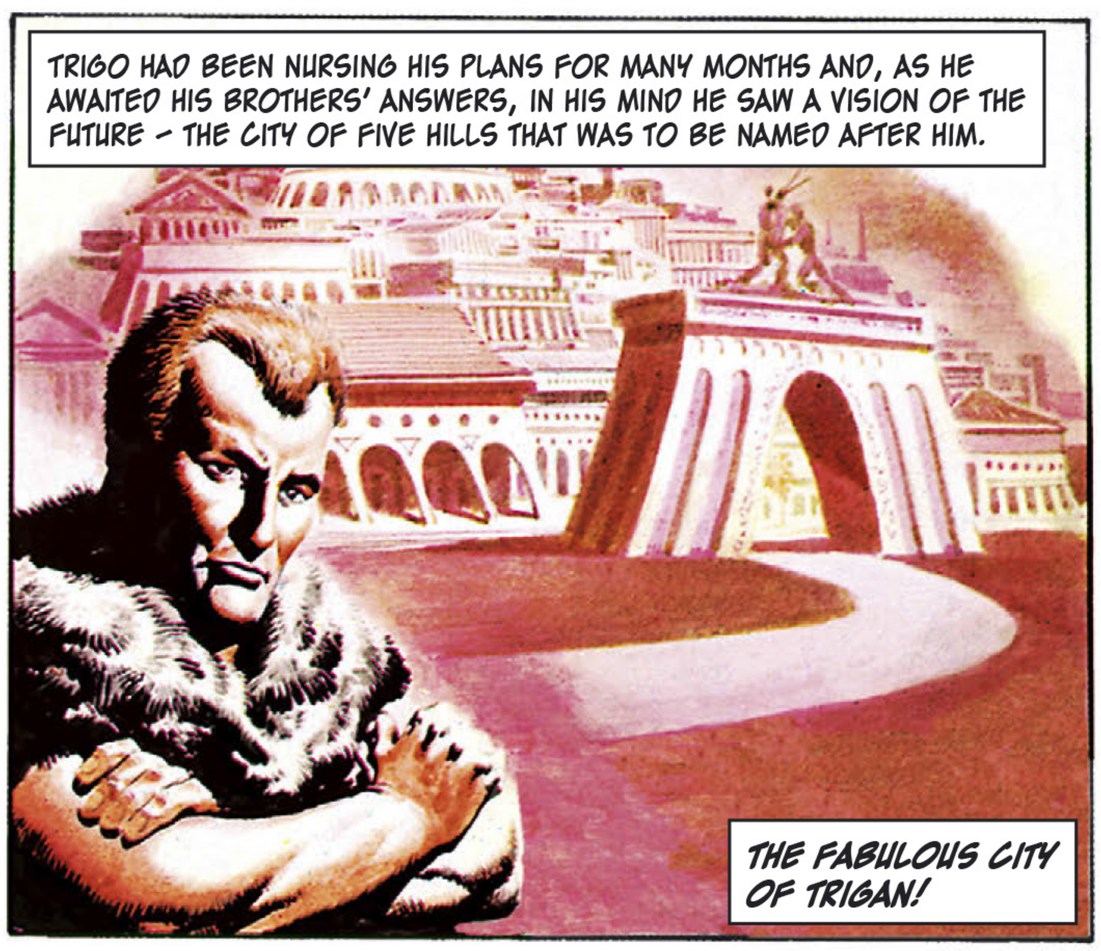

MORE THAN A BILLION MILES FROM OUR WORLD IS THE STAR OF YARNA AND CIRCLING IT, AS WE CIRCLE THE SUN, IS THE PLANET ELEKTON. IT HAS EIGHT VAST CONTINENTS, THE MOST IMPORTANT BEING THE CONTINENT OF VICTRIS. WHEN THE TRIGAN STORY COMMENCES, VICTRIS CONSISTED OF FIVE COUNTRIES.
LOKA
THARV
VORG
DAVELI
CATO

IN THOSE DAYS, WANDERING BUT HIGHLY CIVILISED TRIBES INHABITED THE COUNTRY OF VORG. WE ARE CONCERNED WITH A CERTAIN TRIBE LED BY THREE BROTHERS – TRIPLETS – NAMED BRAG, KLUD AND TRIGO.
LET US CAMP YONDER. THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST SAY TO YOU, MY BROTHERS.

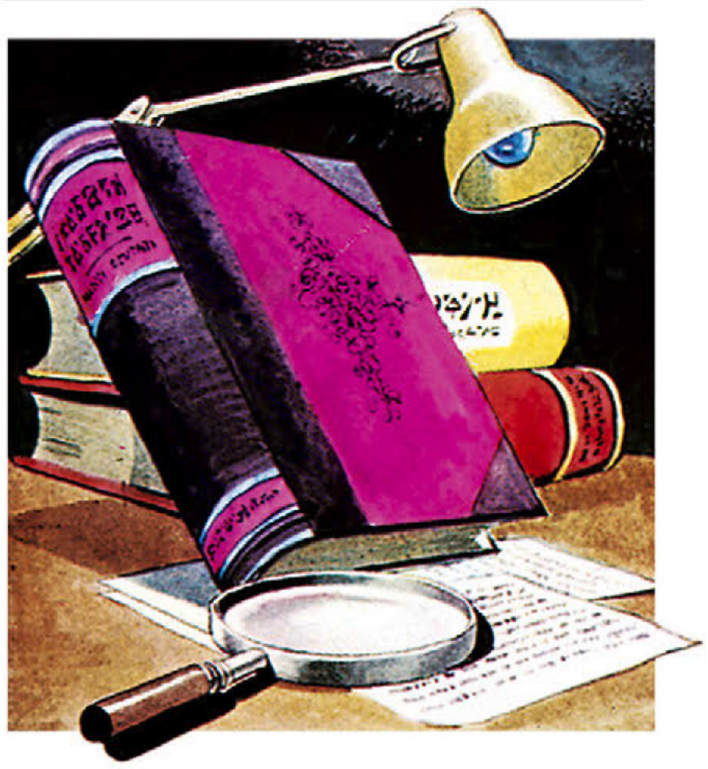

THE SEEDS OF THE FUTURE MIGHTY TRIGAN EMPIRE WERE SOWN ON THAT EVENING OF VORGAN SUNSET BY THE AMBITIOUS TRIGO.
FOR CENTURIES NOW LOKA HAS BEEN PREPARING FOR PLANET CONQUEST. THEY ARE HIGHLY MECHANISED ON LAND, SEA AND IN THE AIR – WHILE WE HERE IN VORG IGNORE THEIR PLANS. HERE WE STILL LIVE AS DID OUR FATHERS.

OUR NATION IS SPLIT UP INTO SMALL TRIBES, LIVING OFF THE LAND THAT IS FRUITFUL IN ALL THAT WE NEED TO LIVE – BUT WANDERING... ALWAYS WANDERING.

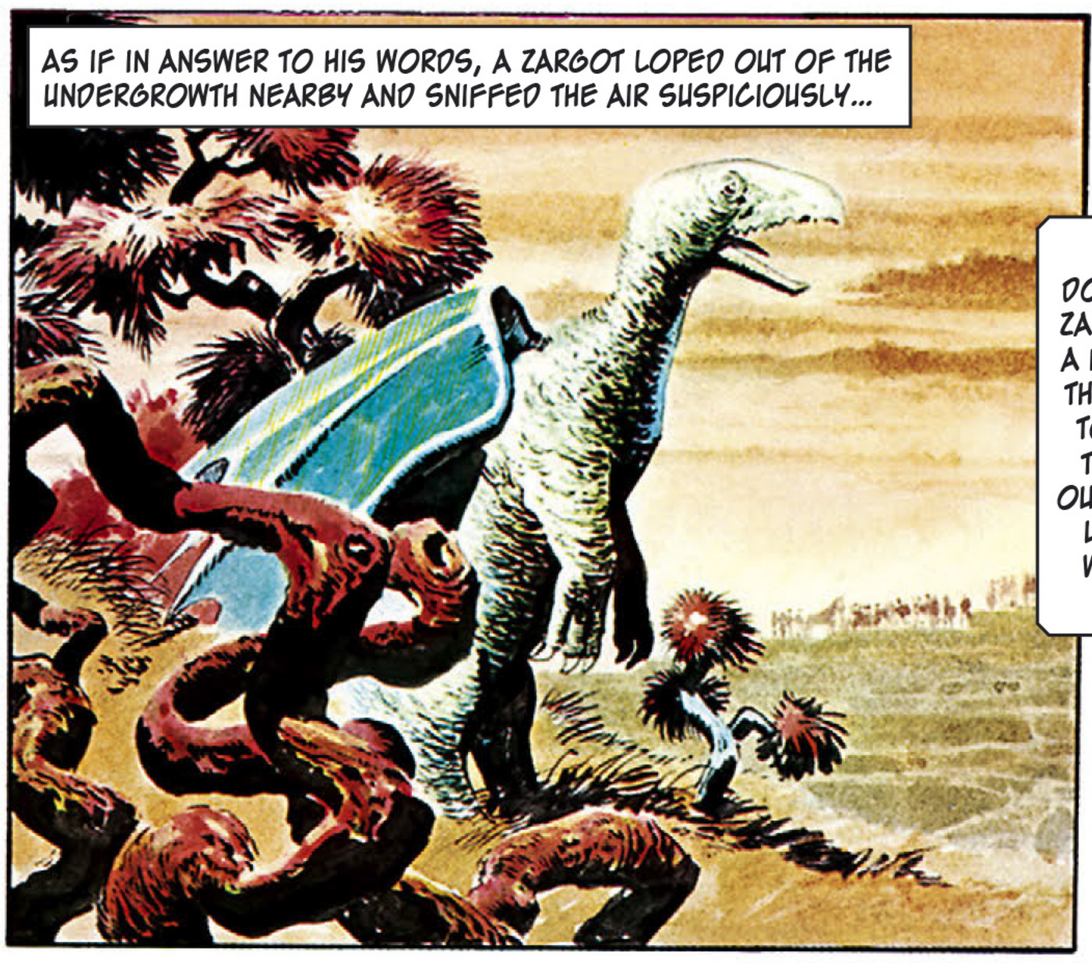
WE MUST STOP WANDERING AND TAKE ROOT. LET US BUILD BESIDE THAT RIVER RUNNING BETWEEN THE FIVE HILLS. BUILD – AND CALL TO OTHER TRIBES TO JOIN US WHILE THERE IS YET TIME.

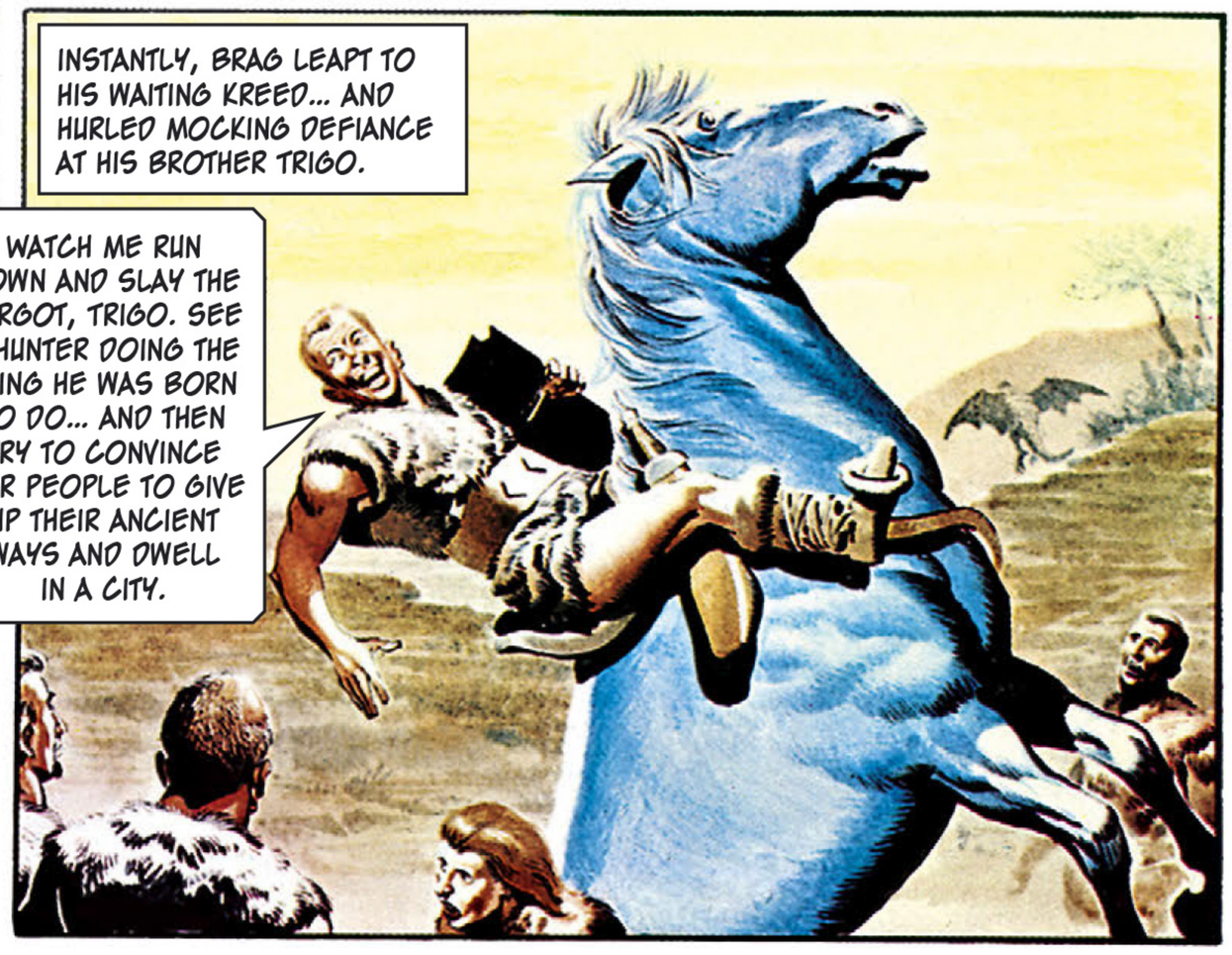

TRIGO HAD BEEN NURSING HIS PLANS FOR MANY MONTHS AND, AS HE AWAITED HIS BROTHERS' ANSWERS, IN HIS MIND HE SAW A VISION OF THE FUTURE – THE CITY OF FIVE HILLS THAT WAS TO BE NAMED AFTER HIM.
THE FABULOUS CITY OF TRIGAN!

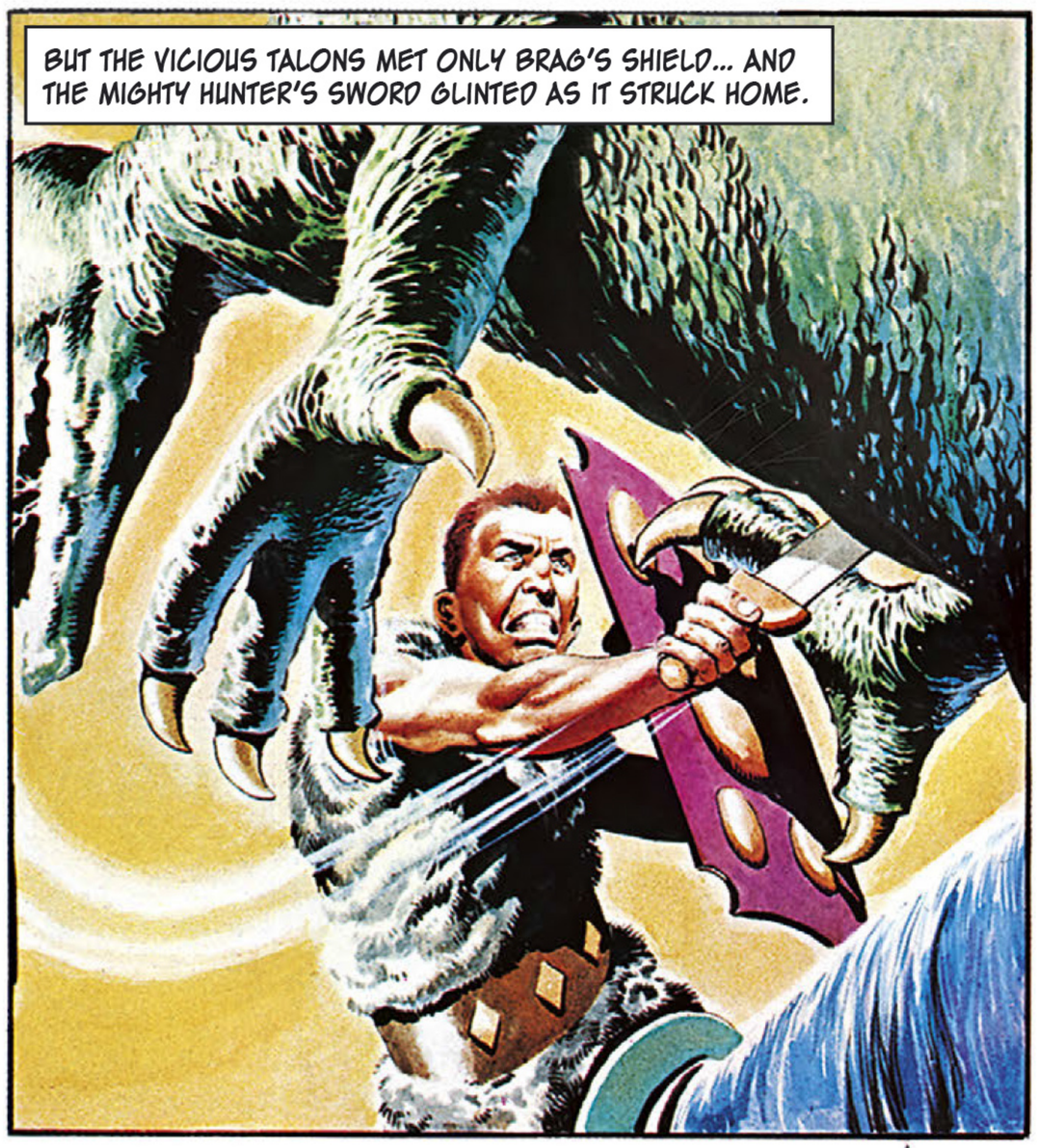
THE MORE PROFESSOR HADDON TRANSLATED FROM THE WONDROUS VOLUMES FOUND IN THE STRANGE SPACECRAFT, THE MORE ASTONISHED HE BECAME AT THE STORY THEY TOLD... THE STORY OF THE BROTHERS TRIGO, KLUD AND BRAG...

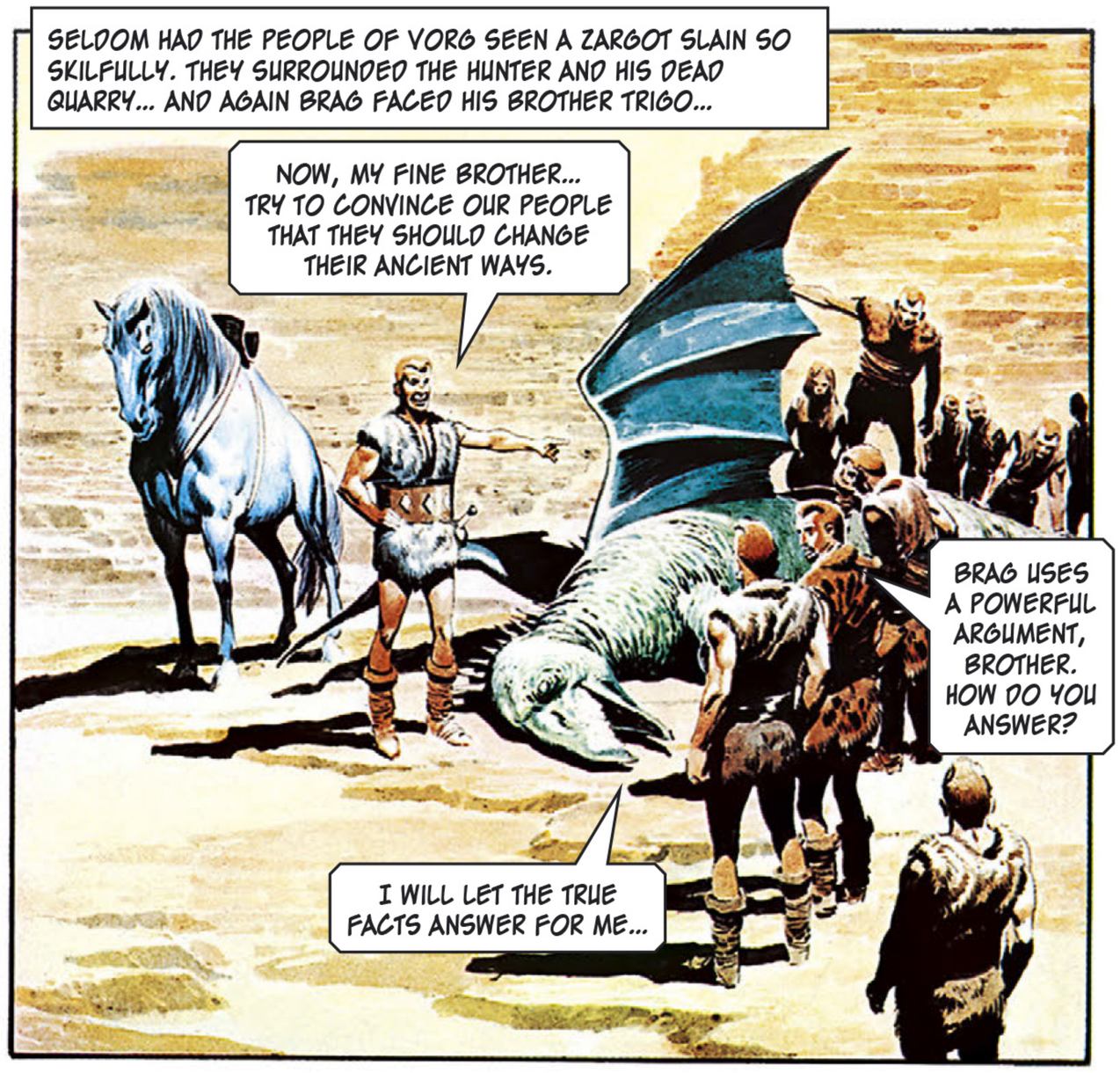


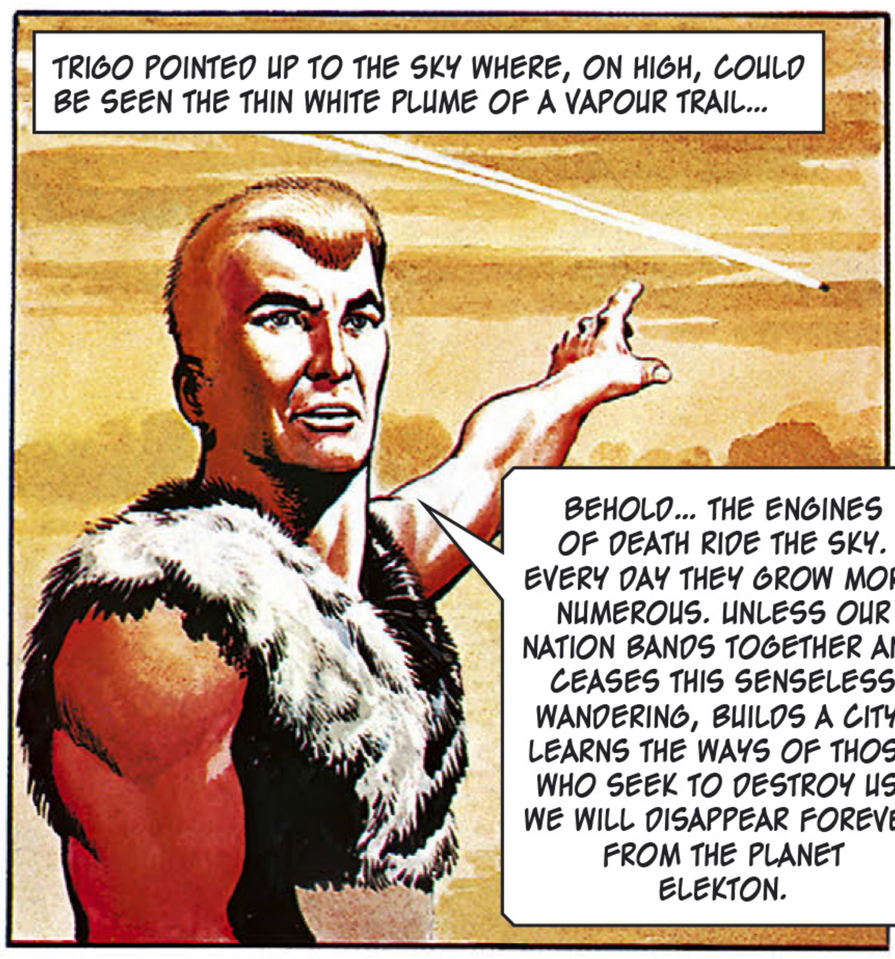
TRIGO, KLUD AND BRAG WERE TRIPLETS – LEADERS OF A WANDERING TRIBE IN THE COUNTRY OF VORG. FEARFUL OF INVASION FROM A HIGHLY MECHANISED COUNTRY NAMED LOKA, TRIGO SUGGESTED TO HIS BROTHERS THAT THEY CEASE THEIR WANDERING AND BUILD A CITY WHERE THEY COULD SETTLE DOWN, MASS THE STRENGTH OF OTHER TRIBES AND PREPARE FOR THE ATTACK FROM LOKA. THE BROTHERS SLEPT ON THE SUGGESTION BUT, NEXT MORNING, BRAG, WHOSE ONLY JOY IN LIFE WAS HUNTING, SNEERED AT HIS BROTHER TRIGO.

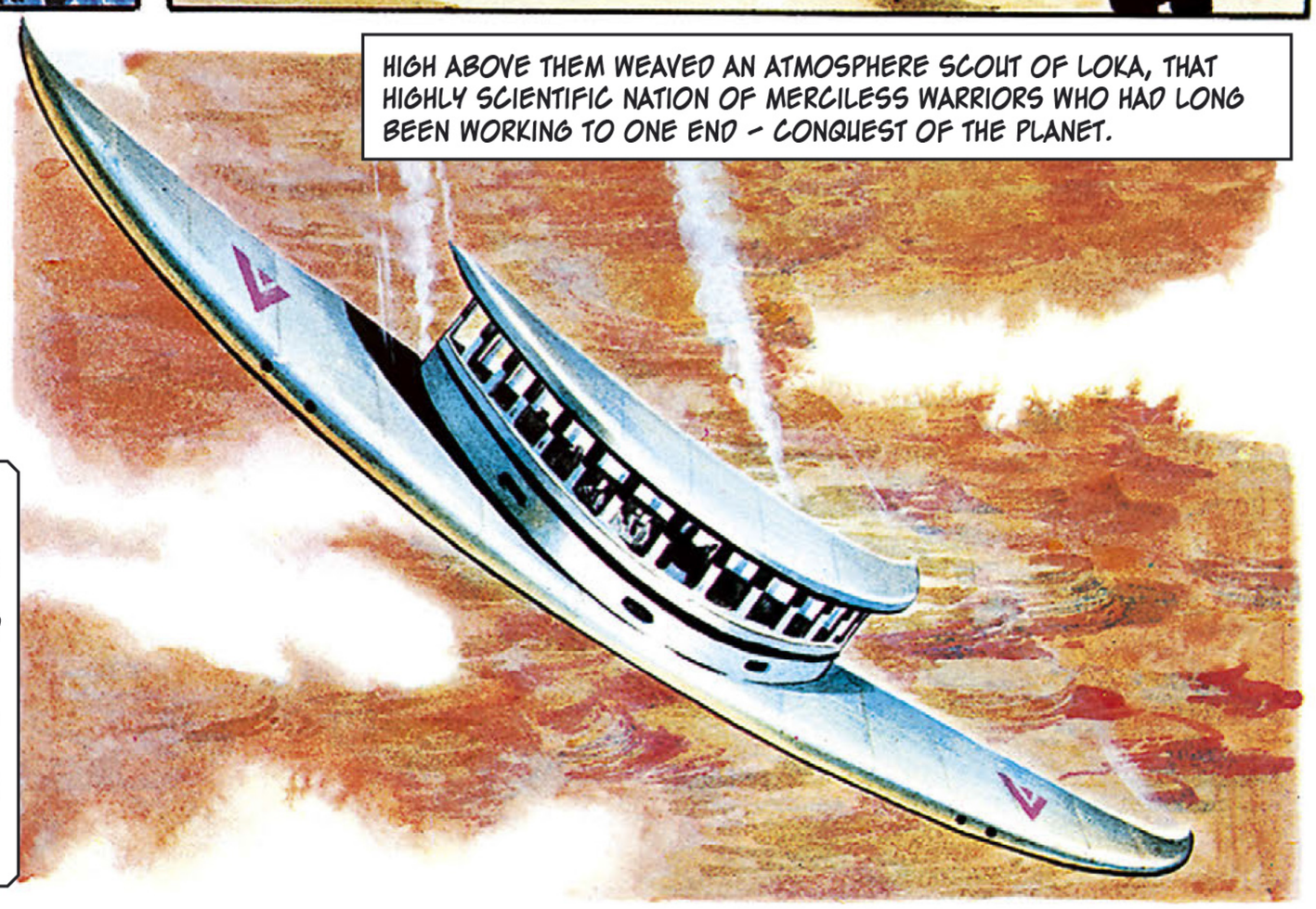





BUT THE VICIOUS TALONS MET ONLY BRAG'S SHIELD... AND THE MIGHTY HUNTER'S SWORD GLINTED AS IT STRUCK HOME.


SELDOM HAD THE PEOPLE OF VORG SEEN A ZARGOT SLAIN SO SKILFULLY. THEY SURROUNDED THE HUNTER AND HIS DEAD QUARRY... AND AGAIN BRAG FACED HIS BROTHER TRIGO...
NOW, MY FINE BROTHER... TRY TO CONVINCE OUR PEOPLE THAT THEY SHOULD CHANGE THEIR ANCIENT WAYS.
BRAG USES A POWERFUL ARGUMENT, BROTHER. HOW DO YOU ANSWER?
I WILL LET THE TRUE FACTS ANSWER FOR ME...

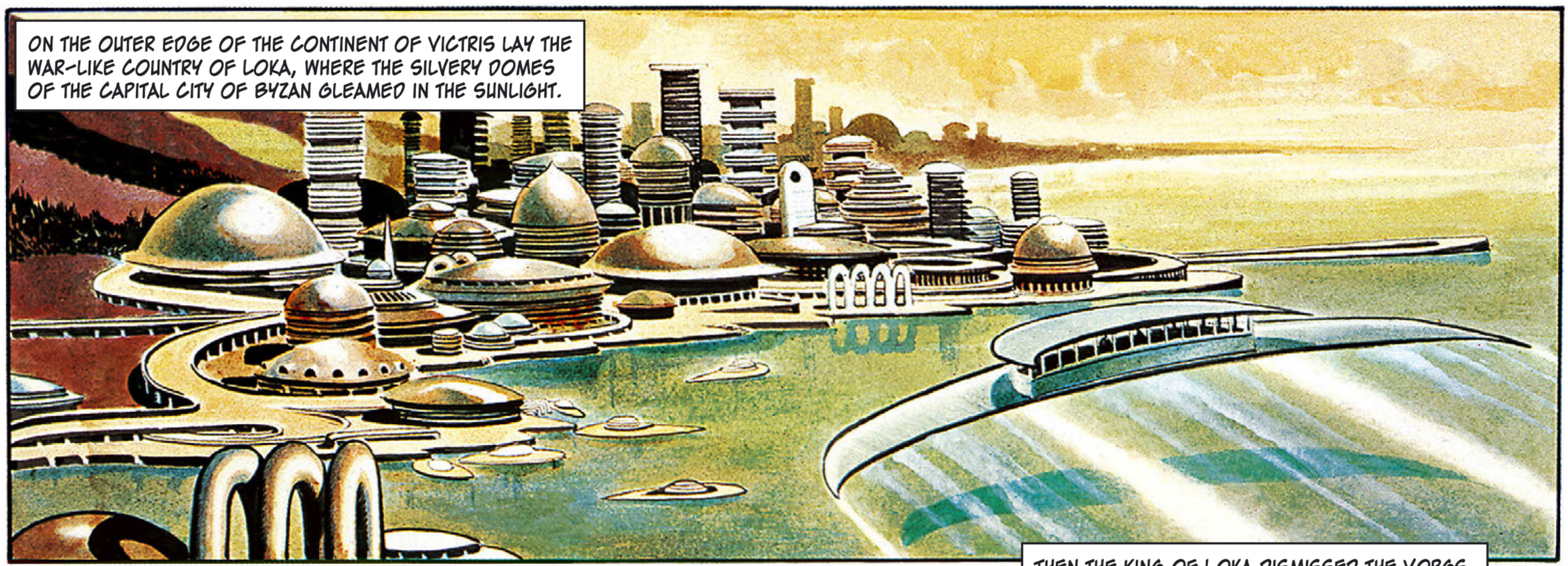

TRIGO POINTED UP TO THE SKY WHERE, ON HIGH, COULD BE SEEN THE THIN WHITE PLUME OF A VAPOUR TRAIL...
BEHOLD... THE ENGINES OF DEATH RIDE THE SKY. EVERY DAY THEY GROW MORE NUMEROUS. UNLESS OUR NATION BANDS TOGETHER AND CEASES THIS SENSELESS WANDERING, BUILDS A CITY, LEARNS THE WAYS OF THOSE WHO SEEK TO DESTROY US, WE WILL DISAPPEAR FOREVER FROM THE PLANET ELEKTON.

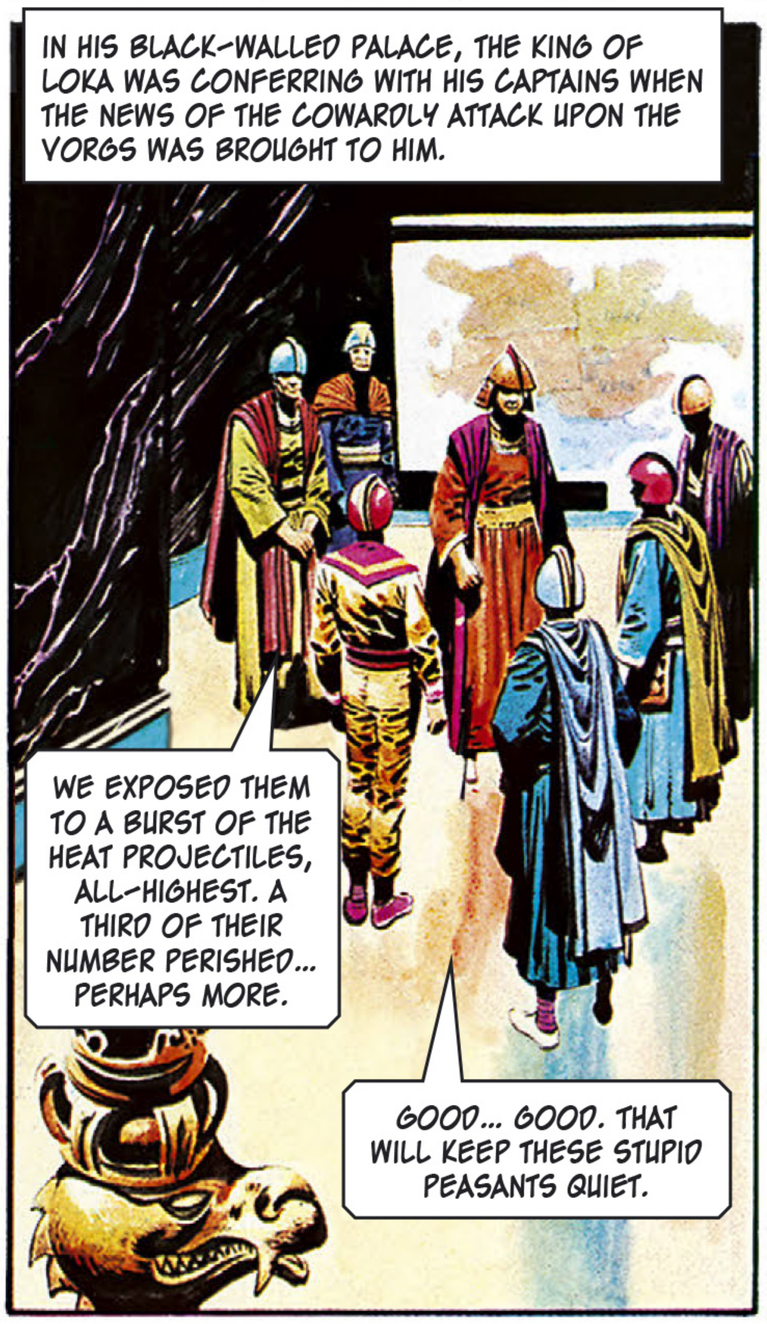

HIGH ABOVE THEM WEAVED AN ATMOSPHERE SCOUT OF LOKA, THAT HIGHLY SCIENTIFIC NATION OF MERCILESS WARRIORS WHO HAD LONG BEEN WORKING TO ONE END - CONQUEST OF THE PLANET.

THE GATHERING ON THE PLAIN BELOW DID NOT PASS UNNOTICED ABOARD THE ATMOSPHERE SCOUT...
I REPORT PEOPLE BELOW IN SECTOR ZERO PURPLE. BY THEIR TRAPPINGS THEY ARE OF VORG... HALF A HUNDRED, PERHAPS MORE.
THEN I THINK THE TIME HAS COME TO GIVE THESE IGNORANT ANIMALS A FORETASTE OF THEIR FATE... PREPARE FOR GROUND ATTACK!

LIKE A THUNDERBOLT, THE ATTACKING SCOUT SCREECHED GROUNDWARDS... AND THE SEARING GLARE OF ITS HEAT PROJECTILES ILLUMINATED THE PLAIN WITH THEIR HIDEOUS LIGHT...
SCATTER... SCATTER! THIS IS NO ZARGOT TO BE SMITTEN WITH A SWORD... THIS IS DISASTER!

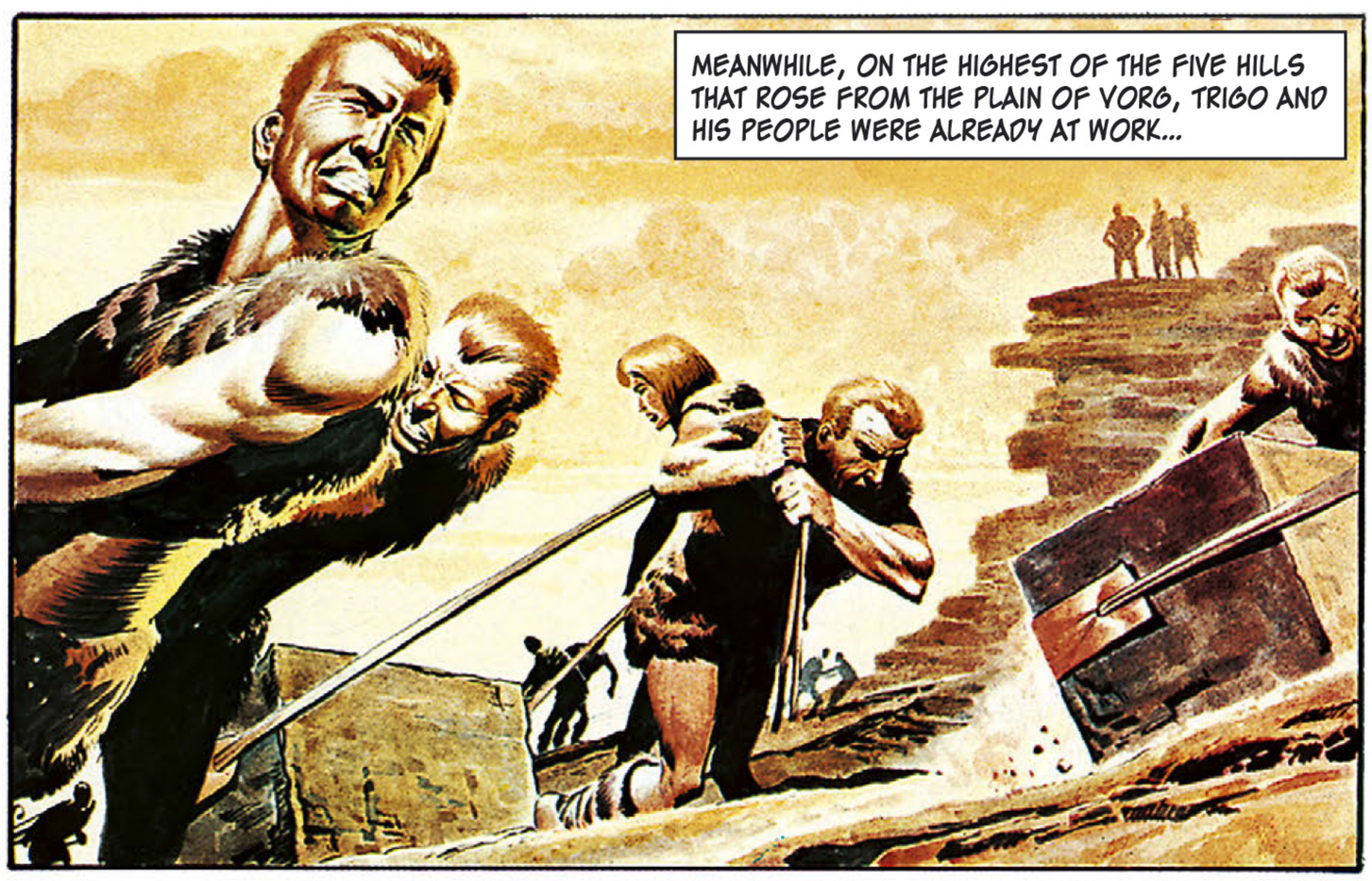
PAGE BY PAGE, PROFESSOR HADDON WORKED HIS WAY THROUGH THE STRANGE BOOKS, ENTRANCED BY THE EVENTS WHICH THEY BROUGHT TO HIS MIND'S EYE...
THE ATTACK LASTED THE TIME IT TAKES A MAN TO DRAW FOUR SWIFT BREATHS... BY THEN THE DEADLY HEAT PROJECTILES HAD DONE THEIR DESTRUCTIVE WORK.
CURSE THE MONSTERS OF LOKA... CURSE THEM UNTIL THE LAST OF THEIR HATED RACE HAS BEEN TRAMPLED INTO DUST!
THE SURVIVORS GATHERED ABOUT THE THREE BROTHERS WHO WERE THEIR LEADERS. BRAG, HIS EYES ROLLING WILDLY, HOWLED LIKE A BEAST IN AGONY.
TRIGO, MY BROTHER... GAZE UPON MY SON, YOUR BELOVED NEPHEW... GAZE UPON HIM... THEN LET US RIDE THROUGH LOKA LIKE AVENGING DEMONS!
NO, MY BROTHER... NO!
QUELLING HIS OWN GRIEF AND FURY, TRIGO ADDRESSED THEM ALL.
IF WE RIDE AGAINST LOKA TONIGHT, WE PEOPLE OF VORG WILL NO LONGER EXIST BY DAWN. IF WE WANT TO SURVIVE, WE MUST PROFIT FROM THIS TERRIBLE LESSON.
THEN... WE DO NOTHING?
FOR ANSWER, TRIGO POINTED TO THE FIVE HILLS THAT ROSE FROM THE PLAIN.
NO, MY BROTHER. WE BUILD OUR CITY... AND WE LEARN THE WAYS OF OUR ENEMIES... AND WE NURSE OUR VENGEANCE IN OUR HEARTS TILL WE ARE READY TO STRIKE!
WE WILL REMEMBER!


ON THE OUTER EDGE OF THE CONTINENT OF VICTRIS LAY THE WAR-LIKE COUNTRY OF LOKA, WHERE THE SILVERY DOMES OF THE CAPITAL CITY OF BYZAN GLEAMED IN THE SUNLIGHT.

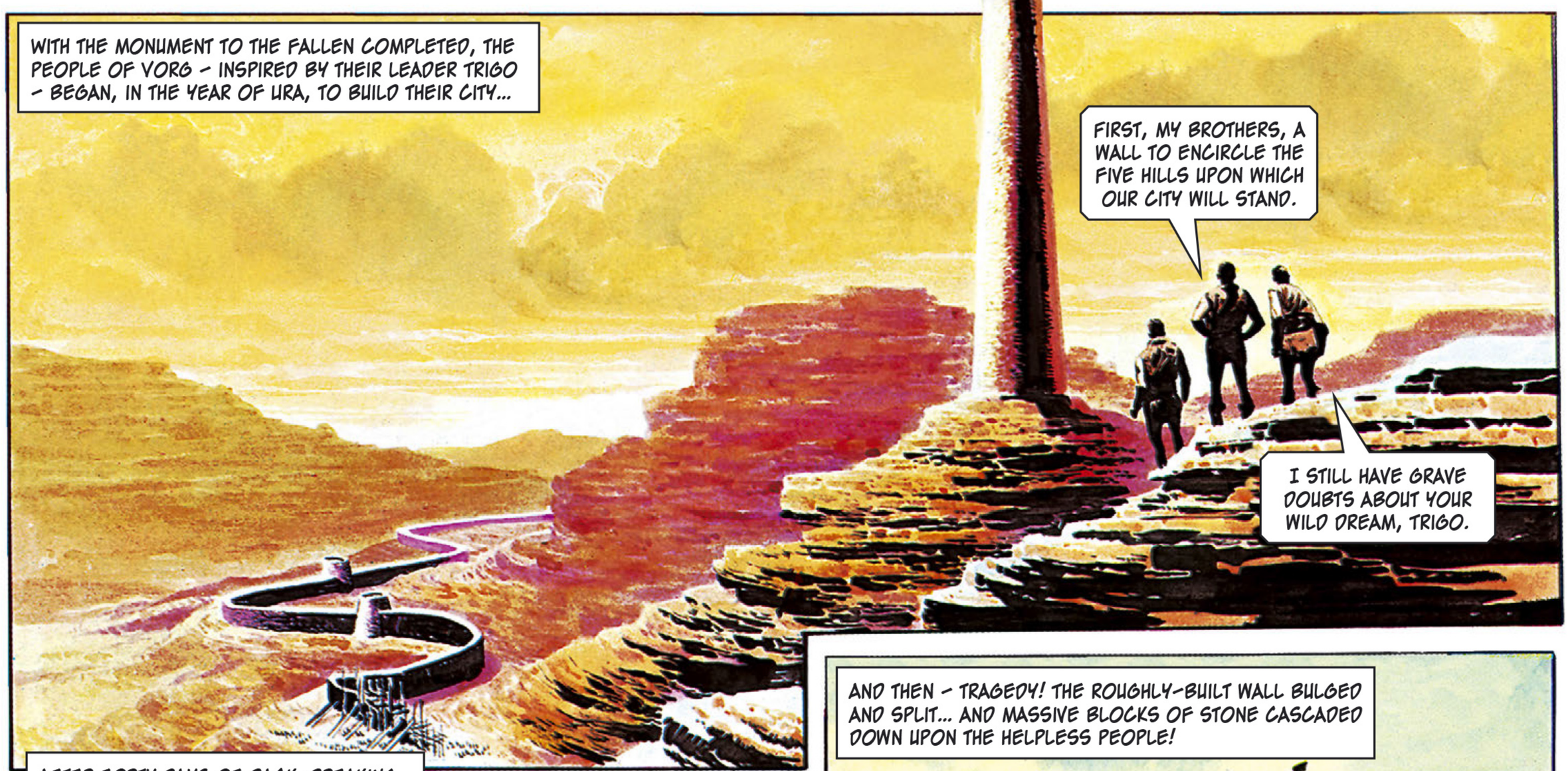

IN HIS BLACK-WALLED PALACE, THE KING OF LOKA WAS CONFERRING WITH HIS CAPTAINS WHEN THE NEWS OF THE COWARDLY ATTACK UPON THE VORGS WAS BROUGHT TO HIM.
WE EXPOSED THEM TO A BURST OF THE HEAT PROJECTILES, ALL-HIGHEST. A THIRD OF THEIR NUMBER PERISHED... PERHAPS MORE.
GOOD... GOOD. THAT WILL KEEP THESE STUPID PEASANTS QUIET.

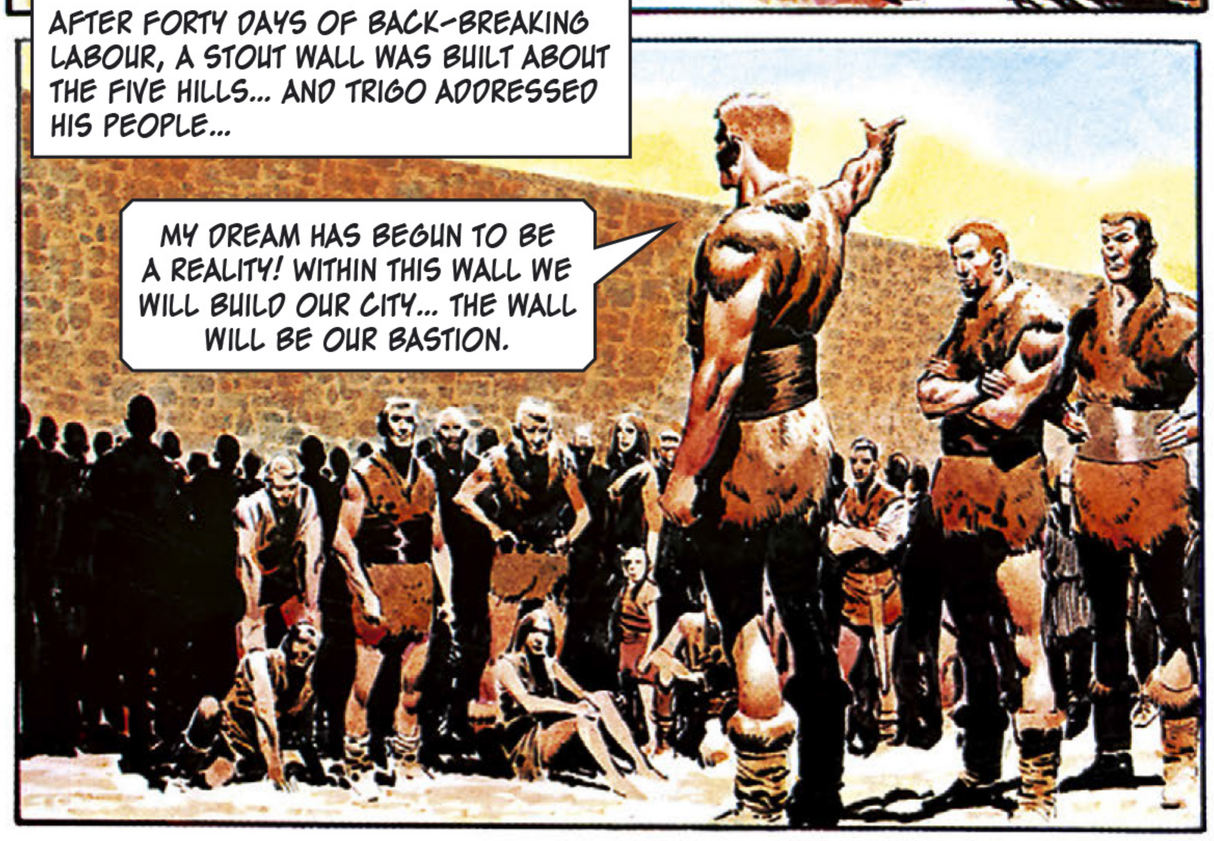
IF THEY ARE SO ILL-ADVISED AS TO SEEK REVENGE, WE WILL DESTROY THEM COMPLETELY. BUT OTHERWISE WE WILL LEAVE THEM IN PEACE... FOR THE TIME BEING!

THEN THE KING OF LOKA DISMISSED THE VORGS FROM HIS MIND AND TURNED TO THE PROBLEM AT HAND... WHICH WAS NOTHING LESS THAN HIS NEXT STEP TO THE CONQUEST OF THE PLANET.
OUR URGENT NEED IS TO TAKE OVER THARV WITH ALL ITS WEALTH. LIKE OURSELVES, THARV IS HIGHLY ADVANCED AND THE WAR WILL BE LONG AND COSTLY... WE ATTACK THARV TOMORROW!


MEANWHILE, ON THE HIGHEST OF THE FIVE HILLS THAT ROSE FROM THE PLAIN OF VORG, TRIGO AND HIS PEOPLE WERE ALREADY AT WORK...

FOUR AGONISING DAYS LATER, A STUPENDOUS MONUMENT STOOD ON THE HILL-CREST... A MONUMENT TO THE SLAIN.
THERE IT WILL STAND TO THE END OF TIME TO REMIND US OF THE LOVED ONES WE HAVE LOST... AND AROUND IT, WE WILL BUILD OUR CITY!


WITH THE MONUMENT TO THE FALLEN COMPLETED, THE PEOPLE OF VORG – INSPIRED BY THEIR LEADER TRIGO – BEGAN, IN THE YEAR OF URA, TO BUILD THEIR CITY...
FIRST, MY BROTHERS, A WALL TO ENCIRCLE THE FIVE HILLS UPON WHICH OUR CITY WILL STAND.
I STILL HAVE GRAVE DOUBTS ABOUT YOUR WILD DREAM, TRIGO.


AFTER FORTY DAYS OF BACK-BREAKING LABOUR, A STOUT WALL WAS BUILT ABOUT THE FIVE HILLS... AND TRIGO ADDRESSED HIS PEOPLE...
MY DREAM HAS BEGUN TO BE A REALITY! WITHIN THIS WALL WE WILL BUILD OUR CITY... THE WALL WILL BE OUR BASTION.

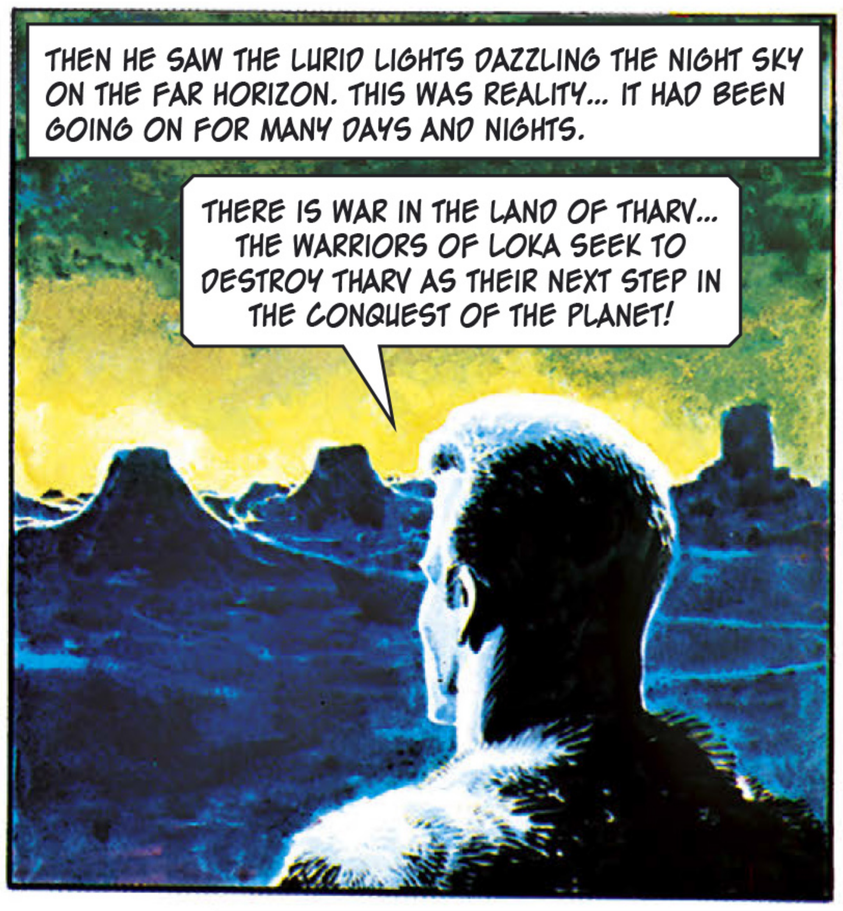
AND THEN – TRAGEDY! THE ROUGHLY-BUILT WALL BULGED AND SPLIT... AND MASSIVE BLOCKS OF STONE CASCADED DOWN UPON THE HELPLESS PEOPLE!

WITH HIS OWN HANDS, TRIGO LABOURED TO DIG OUT THE VICTIMS OF HIS SHATTERED DREAM...
THE STARS BE PRAISED... THIS BOY LIVES!
...AND AFTERWARDS, HE HAD TO FACE THE FURY OF HIS PEOPLE AND THE SCATHING TONGUES OF HIS BROTHERS, BRAG AND KLUD...

FORGET YOUR DREAM... LET US RETURN TO OUR LIFE IN THE WILDERNESS! THE PEOPLE OF VORG ARE MIGHTY HUNTERS – NOTHING MORE!

BUT TRIGO SHOOK HIS HEAD...
I SAY THE CITY WILL BE BUILT – A WAY WILL BE FOUND!

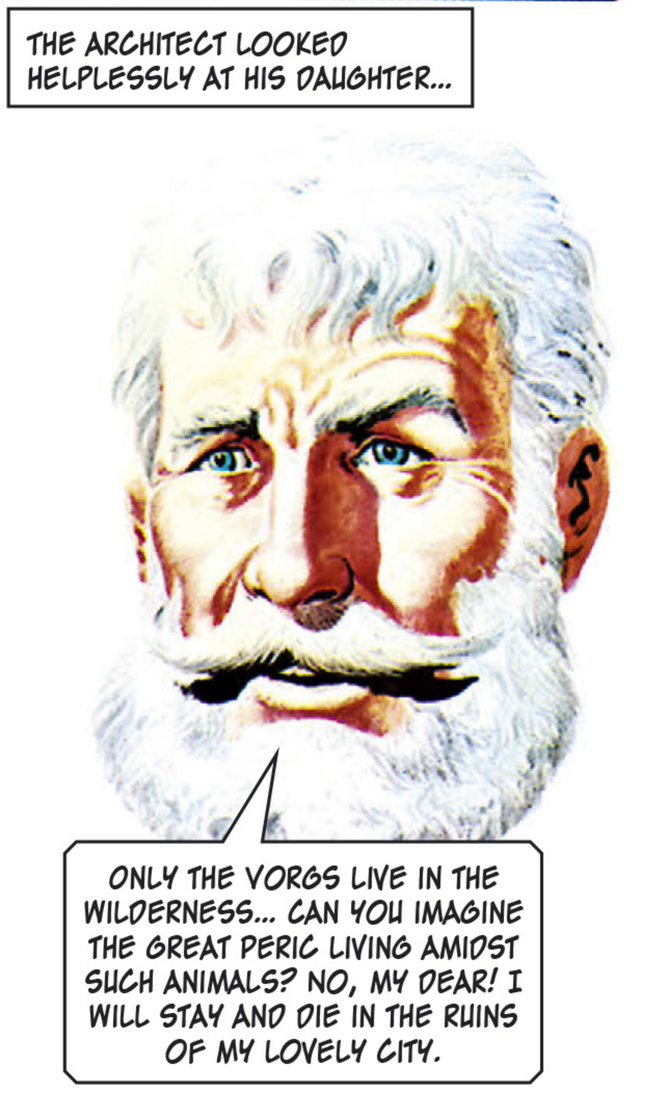
THAT NIGHT, TRIGO ROSE FROM HIS BED OF SKINS AND STOOD LOOKING AT THE BARE FIVE HILLS... AND IN HIS MIND HE SAW AGAIN THE CITY OF HIS DREAMS...
BUT HOW...? HOW?

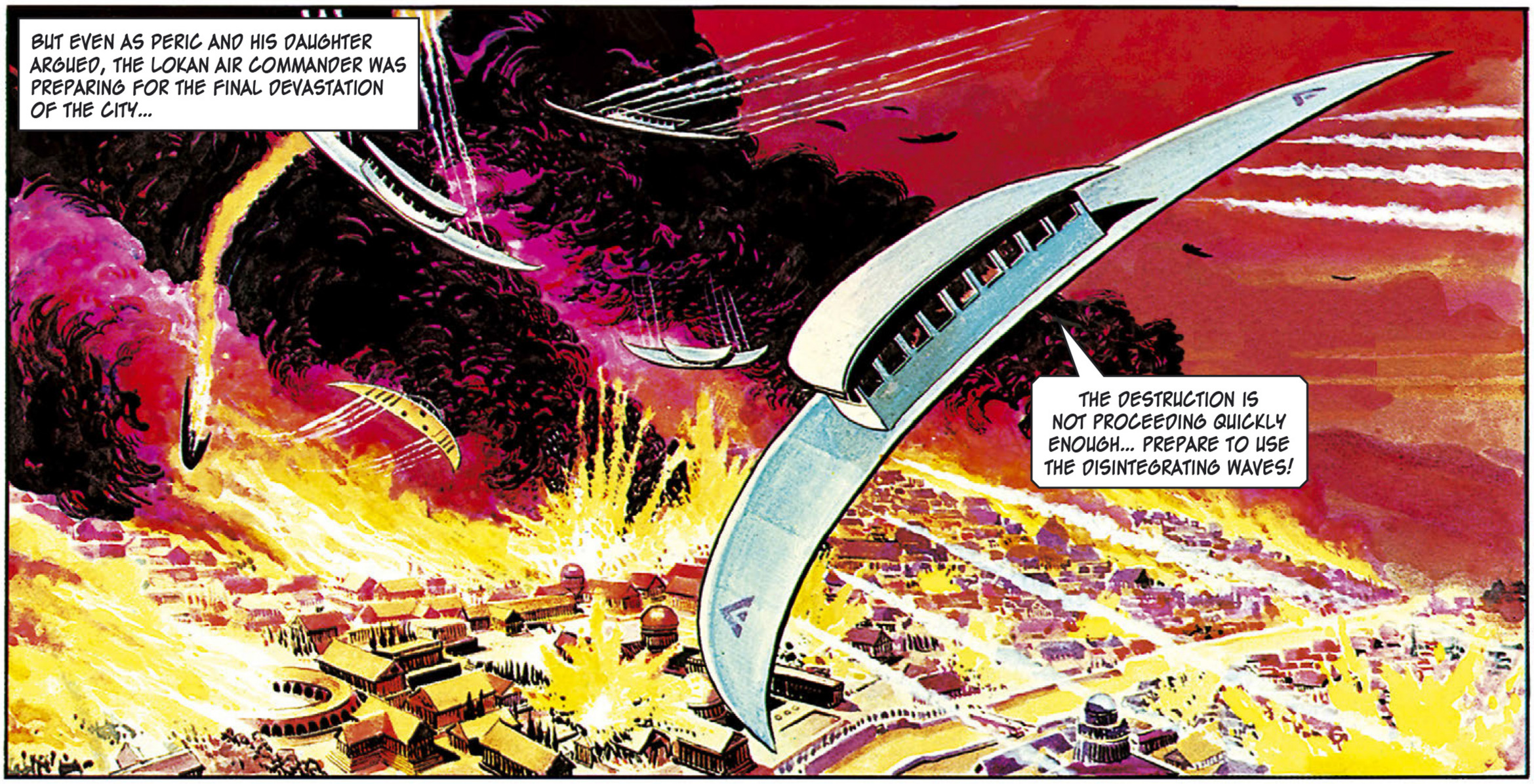

THEN HE SAW THE LURID LIGHTS DAZZLING THE NIGHT SKY ON THE FAR HORIZON. THIS WAS REALITY... IT HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR MANY DAYS AND NIGHTS.
THERE IS WAR IN THE LAND OF THARV... THE WARRIORS OF LOKA SEEK TO DESTROY THARV AS THEIR NEXT STEP IN THE CONQUEST OF THE PLANET!

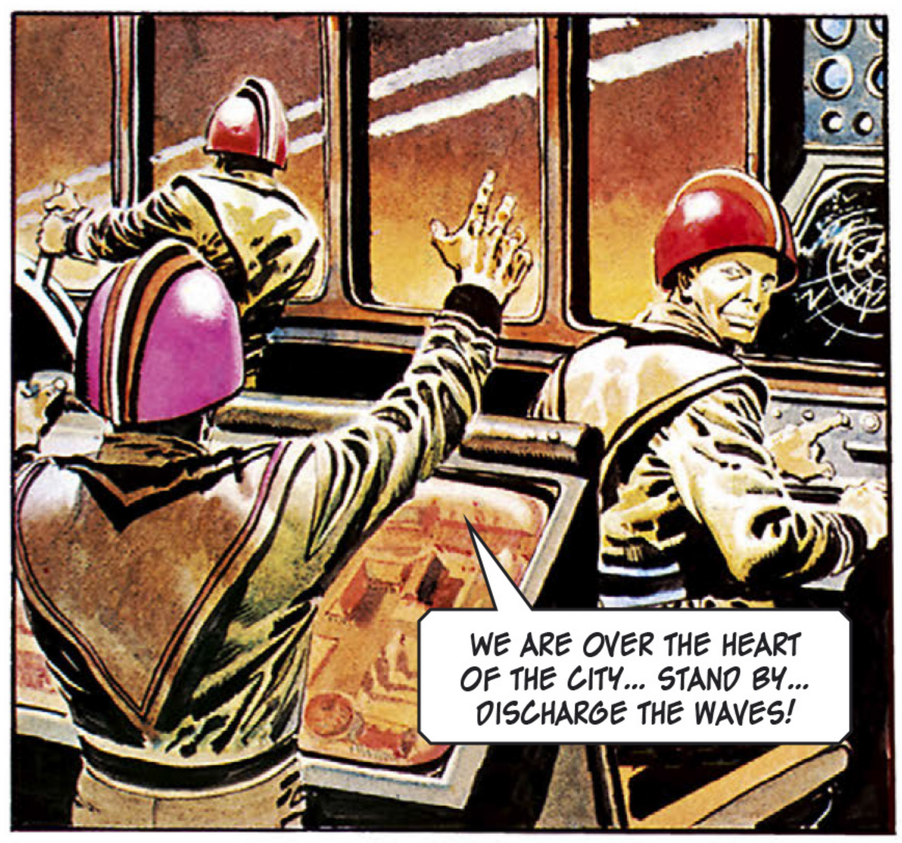
INDEED, AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THE CHIEF CITY OF PEACE-LOVING THARV – RENOWNED AS THE LOVELIEST CITY ON THE PLANET ELEKTON – WAS BEING POUNDED TO RUBBLE BY THE AIR FLEET OF THE VICIOUS LOKANS...

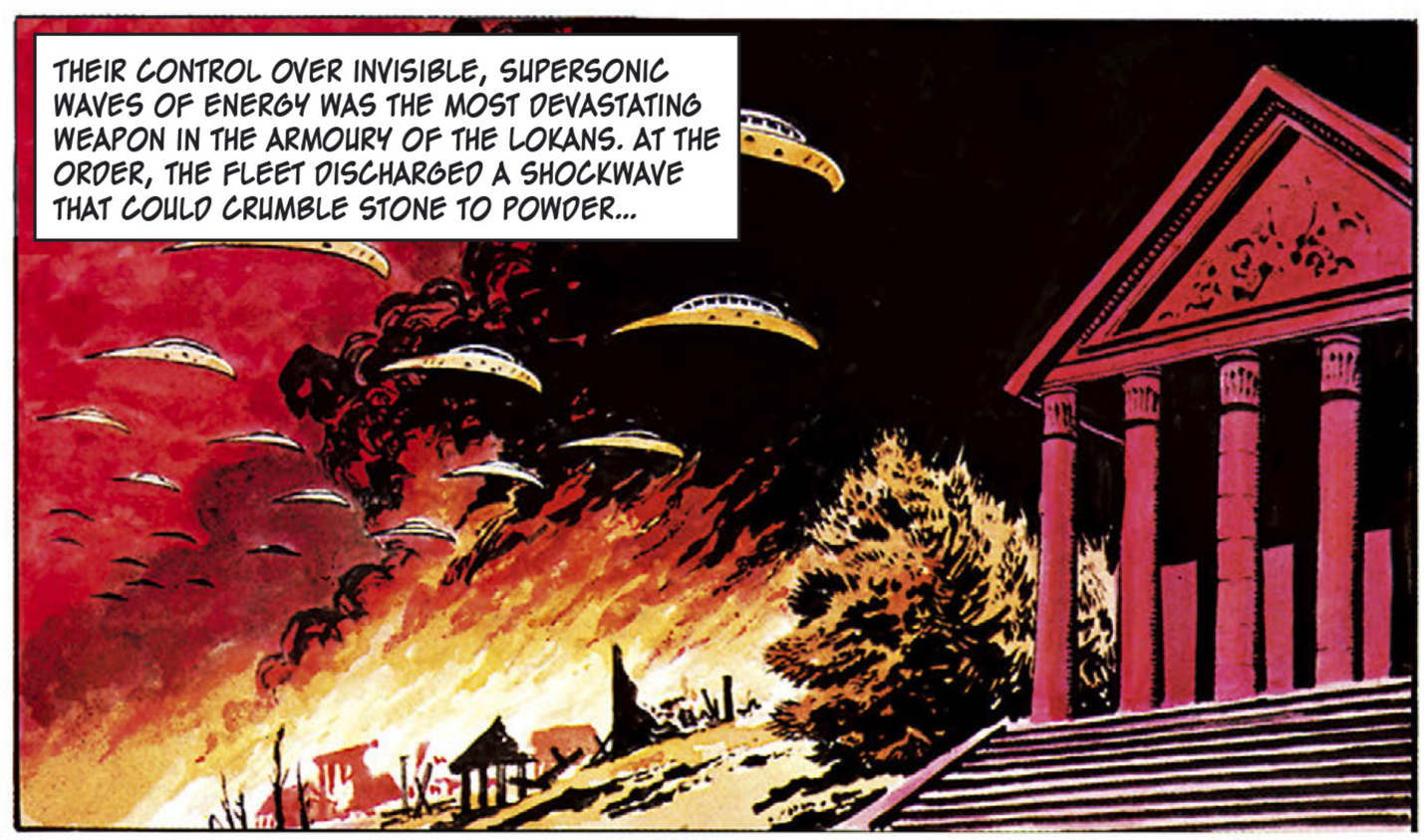
...WHILE IN HIS BLACK-WALLED PALACE, ZORTH, THE EVIL RULER OF LOKA, HEARD REPORTS OF THE ATTACK... AND REJOICED.
BY DAWN, ALL HIGHEST, THE CITY OF THARV WILL BE A MEMORY. THE POPULATION IS FLEEING IN BLIND PANIC... ALL RESISTANCE IS COLLAPSING!
GOOD... GOOD! I THOUGHT THE WAR WOULD BE LONG AND COSTLY BUT I HAD OVERLOOKED THE COWARDICE OF THE THARVS.

AMIDST THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY OF THE THARVS, ONE MAN REMAINED CALM. HE WAS PERIC... THE GREAT ARCHITECT WHO HAD BUILT THE CITY...
FATHER... I BEG YOU! LET US FLEE FROM THE CITY WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME!
WHERE, MY DEAR...? WHERE SHALL WE FLEE...? TO THE WILDERNESS?

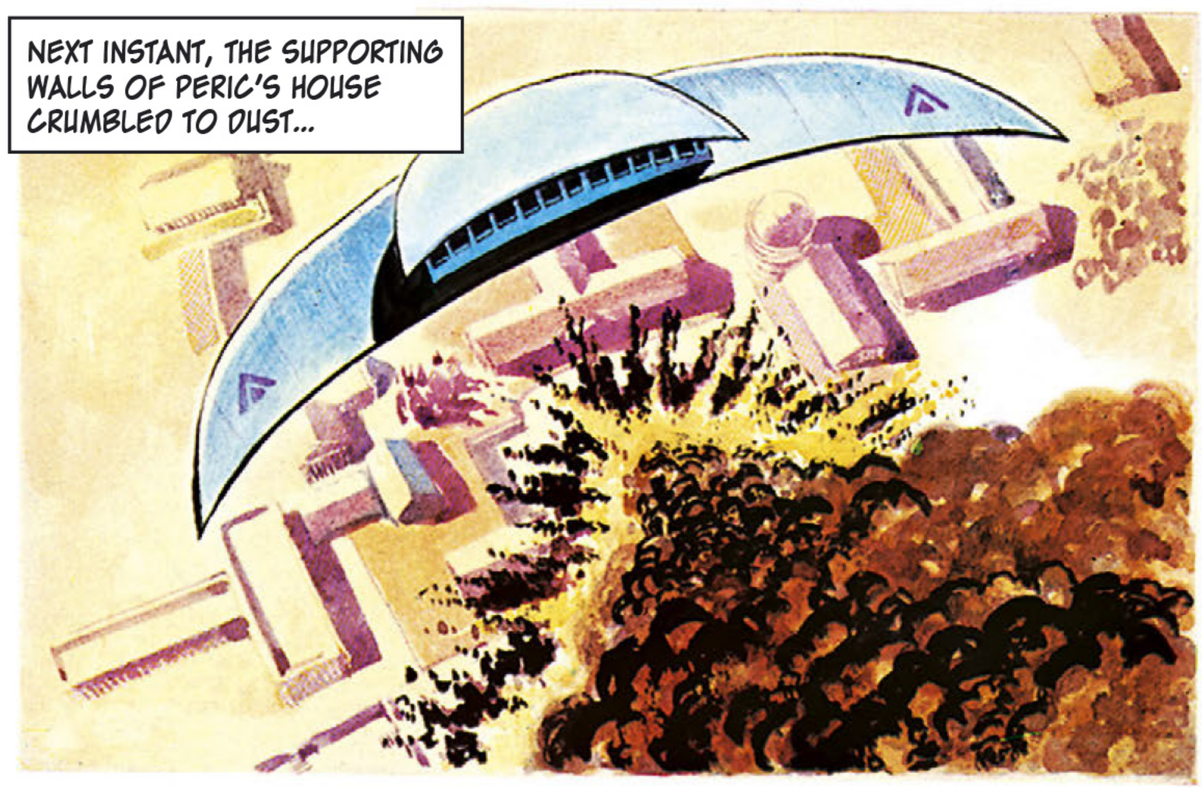

THE ARCHITECT LOOKED HELPLESSLY AT HIS DAUGHTER...
ONLY THE VORGS LIVE IN THE WILDERNESS... CAN YOU IMAGINE THE GREAT PERIC LIVING AMIDST SUCH ANIMALS? NO, MY DEAR! I WILL STAY AND DIE IN THE RUINS OF MY LOVELY CITY.


BUT EVEN AS PERIC AND HIS DAUGHTER ARGUED, THE LOKAN AIR COMMANDER WAS PREPARING FOR THE FINAL DEVASTATION OF THE CITY...
THE DESTRUCTION IS NOT PROCEEDING QUICKLY ENOUGH... PREPARE TO USE THE DISINTEGRATING WAVES!


WE ARE OVER THE HEART OF THE CITY... STAND BY... DISCHARGE THE WAVES!


THEIR CONTROL OVER INVISIBLE, SUPERSONIC WAVES OF ENERGY WAS THE MOST DEVASTATING WEAPON IN THE ARMOURY OF THE LOKANS. AT THE ORDER, THE FLEET DISCHARGED A SHOCKWAVE THAT COULD CRUMBLE STONE TO POWDER...

IN THE STUDY OF HIS SPLENDID HOUSE STOOD PERIC, THE GREAT ARCHITECT OF THARV. AS THE WALLS SHIVERED ABOUT HIM, HE CALLED OUT TO HIS DAUGHTER...
FLEE, SALVIA... SAVE YOURSELF! I WILL STAY AND DIE WITH THE CITY THAT I BUILT!
FATHER... I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU!


NEXT INSTANT, THE SUPPORTING WALLS OF PERIC'S HOUSE CRUMBLED TO DUST...

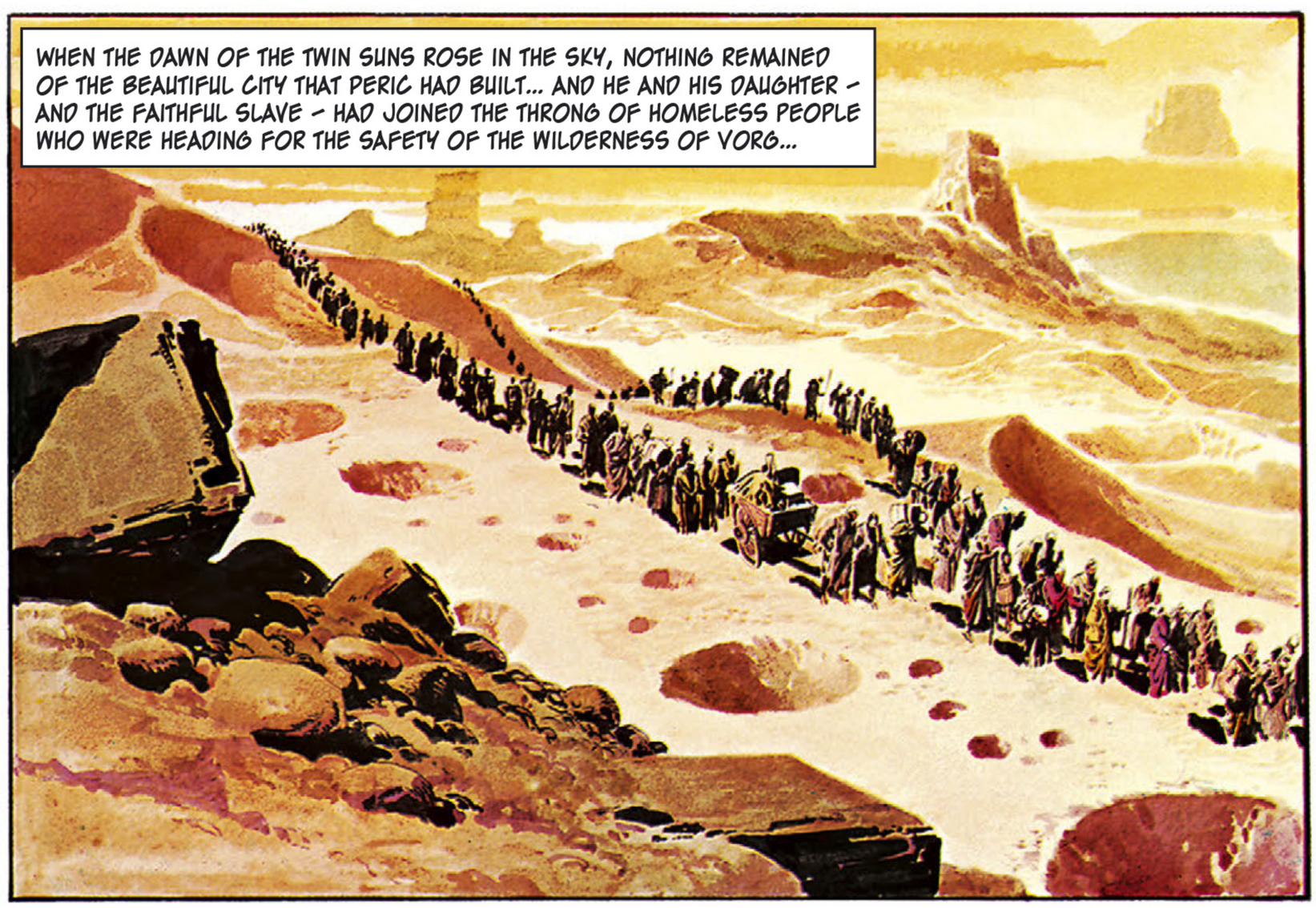
SALVIA SAW HER FATHER BURIED BENEATH THE MASONRY OF THE CEILING...
FATHER!

IN VAIN, SHE STROVE TO FREE HER FATHER. AND THEN... A SHADOW FELL ACROSS HER...
AAAAH!
THE MASTER... IS HE... DEAD?

SALVIA WAS SCARED... THE NEWCOMER WAS ONE OF HER FATHER'S ZOLTAN SLAVES. THE ZOLTS WERE A PRIMITIVE PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN CONQUERED BY THE THARVS IN THE DISTANT PAST.
THE ZOLTAN SLAVES HAD ALWAYS BEEN OBEDIENT... BUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NOW THAT THARV WAS NO MORE?

AND THEN... THE MASSIVE CREATURE STOOPED AND CLEARED THE MASSIVE STONES FROM THE PROSTRATE MAN.

THROWING PERIC OVER HIS BROAD SHOULDER LIKE A RAG DOLL, THE GIANT ZOLT SHAMBLED FROM THE RUINS, BECKONING TO THE GIRL TO FOLLOW HIM...
LADY... COME... OR WE WILL PERISH WITH THE OTHERS.


WHEN THE DAWN OF THE TWIN SUNS ROSE IN THE SKY, NOTHING REMAINED OF THE BEAUTIFUL CITY THAT PERIC HAD BUILT... AND HE AND HIS DAUGHTER – AND THE FAITHFUL SLAVE – HAD JOINED THE THRONG OF HOMELESS PEOPLE WHO WERE HEADING FOR THE SAFETY OF THE WILDERNESS OF VORG...

VORG... WHERE DWELT THE CHIEFTAIN TRIGO, WHO HAD DREAMS OF GREATNESS FOR HIS PEOPLE...

INTO THE WILDERNESS OF THE COUNTRY OF VORG STREAMED STRAGGLING LINES OF DESPAIRING PEOPLE.

AMONG THE TRAGIC MULTITUDE WERE AN OLD MAN AND HIS DAUGHTER... AND THEIR MASSIVE ZOLTAN SLAVE.

WE WILL REST SOON, FATHER, AND I WILL ATTEND TO YOUR WOUNDS... THEN THE ZOLT HERE CAN FORAGE FOR FOOD AND WATER...

HUH! WHERE WILL HE FIND FOOD AND WATER IN THIS WILDERNESS? NOT FROM THE VORGS, I CAN TELL YOU... THOSE UNCOUTH BARBARIANS WILL GIVE NOTHING TO US!

FROM A ROCKY CRAG ABOVE, A SCOUTING PARTY OF VORGS LOOKED DOWN ON THE NEWCOMERS TO THEIR LAND...

THE THARVS ARE FLEEING FROM THEIR RUINED CITIES, KLUD. SHALL I RIDE BACK AND GIVE THE NEWS TO TRIGO?

NO!

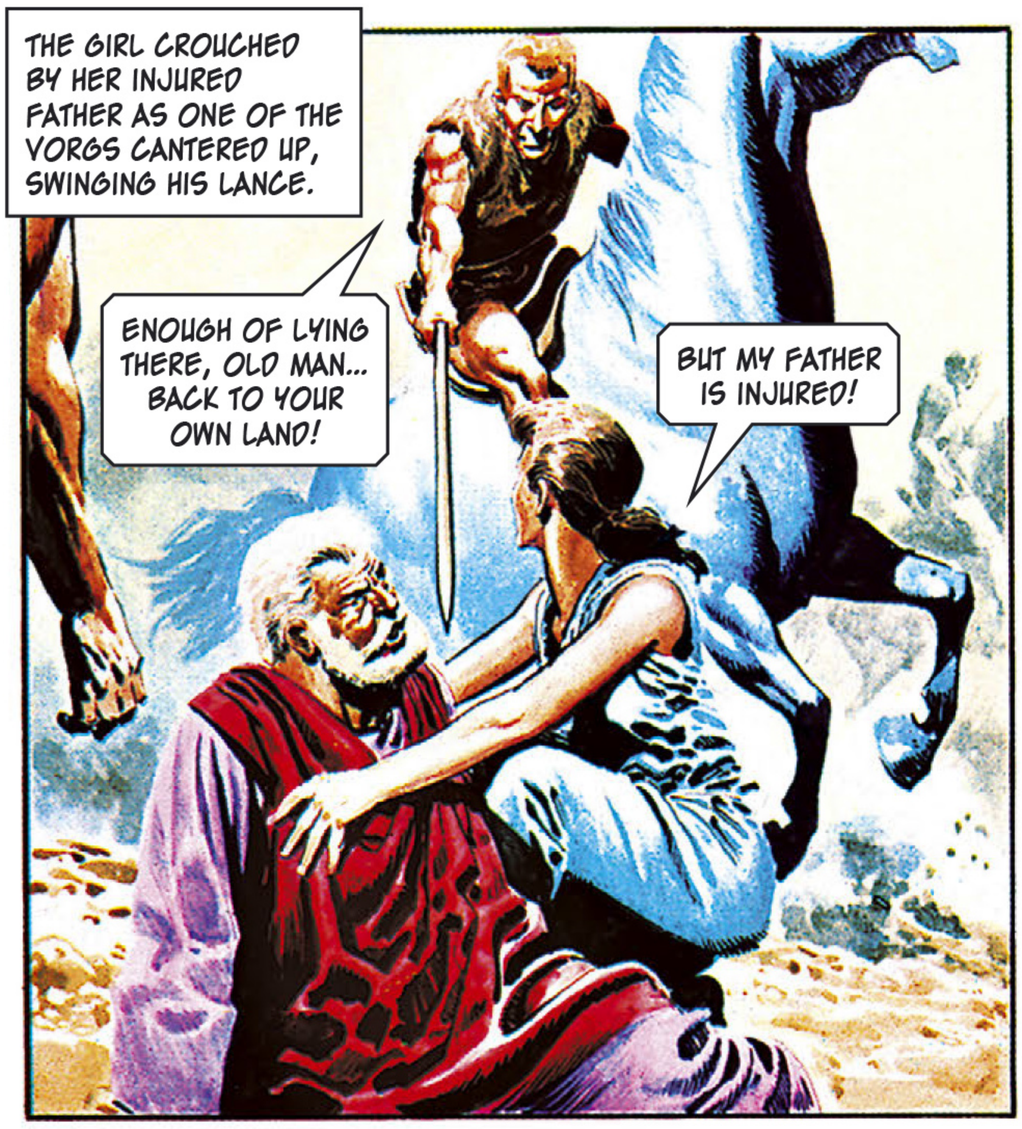
AS ONE OF THE THREE BROTHERS WHO LED THE VORG TRIBES, KLUD BITTERLY RESENTED THE WAY HIS PEOPLE ALWAYS LOOKED TO HIS BROTHER TRIGO FOR THEIR ORDERS.

I AM WELL CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH THIS SITUATION! THERE IS NOT ENOUGH FOOD TO FEED THAT PACK OF COWARDLY FOOLS... DRIVE THEM BACK FROM WHENCE THEY CAME! NOW!

AND SO, THE VORGS RODE DOWN UPON THE FRIGHTENED MULTITUDES AND BRUTALLY DROVE THEM BACK...

IF WE RETURN, THE LOKANS WILL SLAY US ALL.

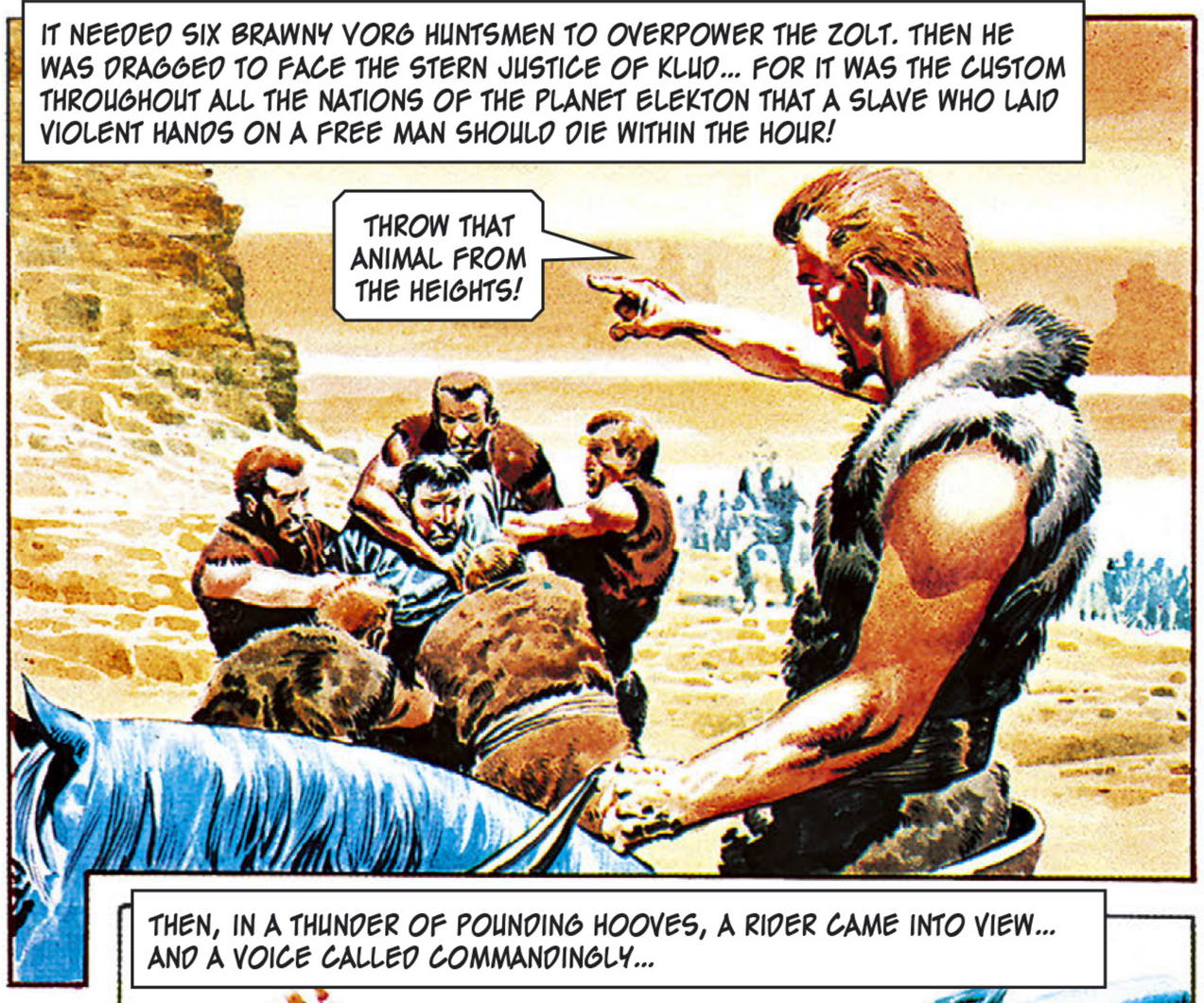
THAT IS YOUR MISFORTUNE, THARVS, NOT OURS. THERE IS NOTHING HERE FOR YOU... MOVE!


THE GIRL CROUCHED BY HER INJURED FATHER AS ONE OF THE VORGS CANTERED UP, SWINGING HIS LANCE.
ENOUGH OF LYING THERE, OLD MAN... BACK TO YOUR OWN LAND!
BUT MY FATHER IS INJURED!

AS THE LANCE CAME HISSING DOWN, A MASSIVE FIGURE LEAPT FORWARD... AND THE VORG WAS DRAGGED FROM HIS CAREERING KREED...

THE FAITHFUL ZOLT HURLED HIS VICTIM HIGH...

...WHERE HE FELL IN A CRUMPLED, UNCONSCIOUS HEAP.
SEIZE THAT ANIMAL OF A SLAVE... SEIZE HIM!


IT NEEDED SIX BRAWNY VORG HUNTSMEN TO OVERPOWER THE ZOLT. THEN HE WAS DRAGGED TO FACE THE STERN JUSTICE OF KLUD... FOR IT WAS THE CUSTOM THROUGHOUT ALL THE NATIONS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON THAT A SLAVE WHO LAID VIOLENT HANDS ON A FREE MAN SHOULD DIE WITHIN THE HOUR!
THROW THAT ANIMAL FROM THE HEIGHTS!

SO THEY BOUND THE ZOLT AND TOOK HIM UP TO THE CRAGGY OVERHANG OF ROCK HIGH ABOVE THE PLAIN... TO MEET HIS VIOLENT END.

THEN, IN A THUNDER OF POUNDING HOOVES, A RIDER CAME INTO VIEW... AND A VOICE CALLED COMMANDINGLY...
STOP!
IT WAS TRIGO, THE GREATEST OF THE VORGS AND THE MIGHTY LEADER OF HIS PEOPLE.

BEFORE THE WATCHING MULTITUDE OF REFUGEE THARVS, TRIGO, THE LEADER OF THE WILD VORG HUNTERS, ADDRESSED HIS MEN...

WHY IS THAT MAN TO BE EXECUTED...? I GAVE NO SUCH ORDER.

A DRY, CONTEMPTUOUS VOICE ANSWERED HIM...

HE IS TO DIE BECAUSE HE STRUCK ONE OF YOUR UNCOUTH BARBARIANS, WHICH IS ABSURD... IT IS THE SAME AS KICKING A MAN FOR CORRECTING A STUPID ANIMAL!

THE SHAFT OF A VORG'S HUNTING SPEAR WAS RAISED TO STRIKE THE OLD THARV... BUT TRIGO CHECKED THE MAN'S ARM...

INSOLENT OLD FOOL!

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT IS YOUR NAME, THARV?

PROUDLY – AND STILL WITH CONTEMPT – THE OLD THARV ANSWERED THE VORG LEADER...

MY NAME IS PERIC... NOT THAT THE NAME WILL MEAN ANYTHING TO AN IGNORANT BARBARIAN LIKE YOURSELF!

AT THIS, TRIGO'S FINE EYES WIDENED WITH WONDERMENT... AND HE SPOKE, HALF TO HIMSELF...

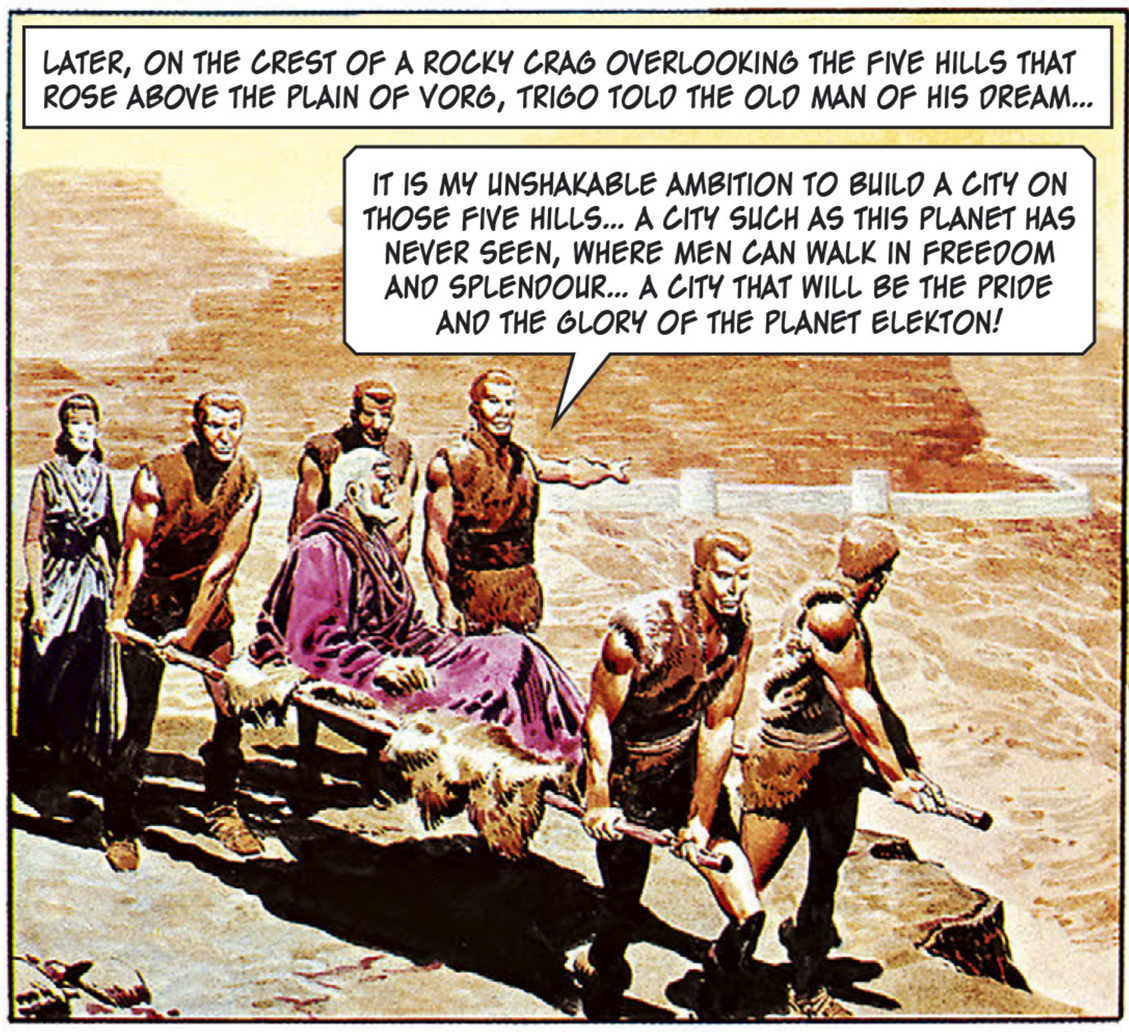
PERIC THE ARCHITECT... THE MASTER-BUILDER OF THARV! THE INVENTOR OF THE UNSUPPORTED DOME... THE GREAT ENGINEER WHO RAISED THE WIDEST ARCH EVER TO BE BUILT UPON THIS PLANET!

NOW IT WAS THE TURN OF PERIC TO BE AMAZED...

BY THE STARS, YOU ARE WELL INFORMED FOR A BARBARIAN... I DO NOT UNDERSTAND...

YOU WILL UNDERSTAND PRESENTLY, PERIC...

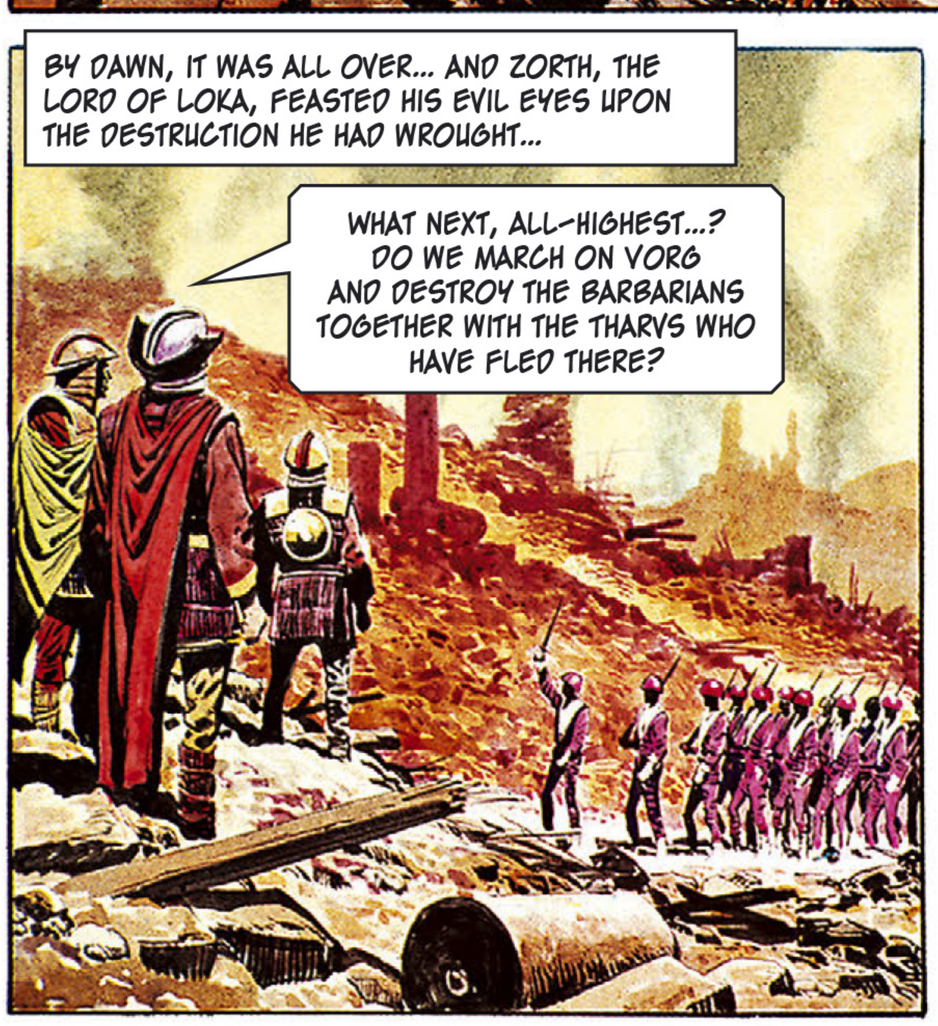
TAKE UP PERIC... CARRY HIM GENTLY... AND BRING HIM AFTER ME!


LATER, ON THE CREST OF A ROCKY CRAG OVERLOOKING THE FIVE HILLS THAT ROSE ABOVE THE PLAIN OF VORG, TRIGO TOLD THE OLD MAN OF HIS DREAM...
IT IS MY UNSHAKABLE AMBITION TO BUILD A CITY ON THOSE FIVE HILLS... A CITY SUCH AS THIS PLANET HAS NEVER SEEN, WHERE MEN CAN WALK IN FREEDOM AND SPLENDOUR... A CITY THAT WILL BE THE PRIDE AND THE GLORY OF THE PLANET ELEKTON!

ONLY ONE MAN CAN TURN MY DREAM INTO REALITY – AND FATE HAS SENT HIM TO ME. WILL YOU DIRECT THE BUILDING OF MY CITY, PERIC?

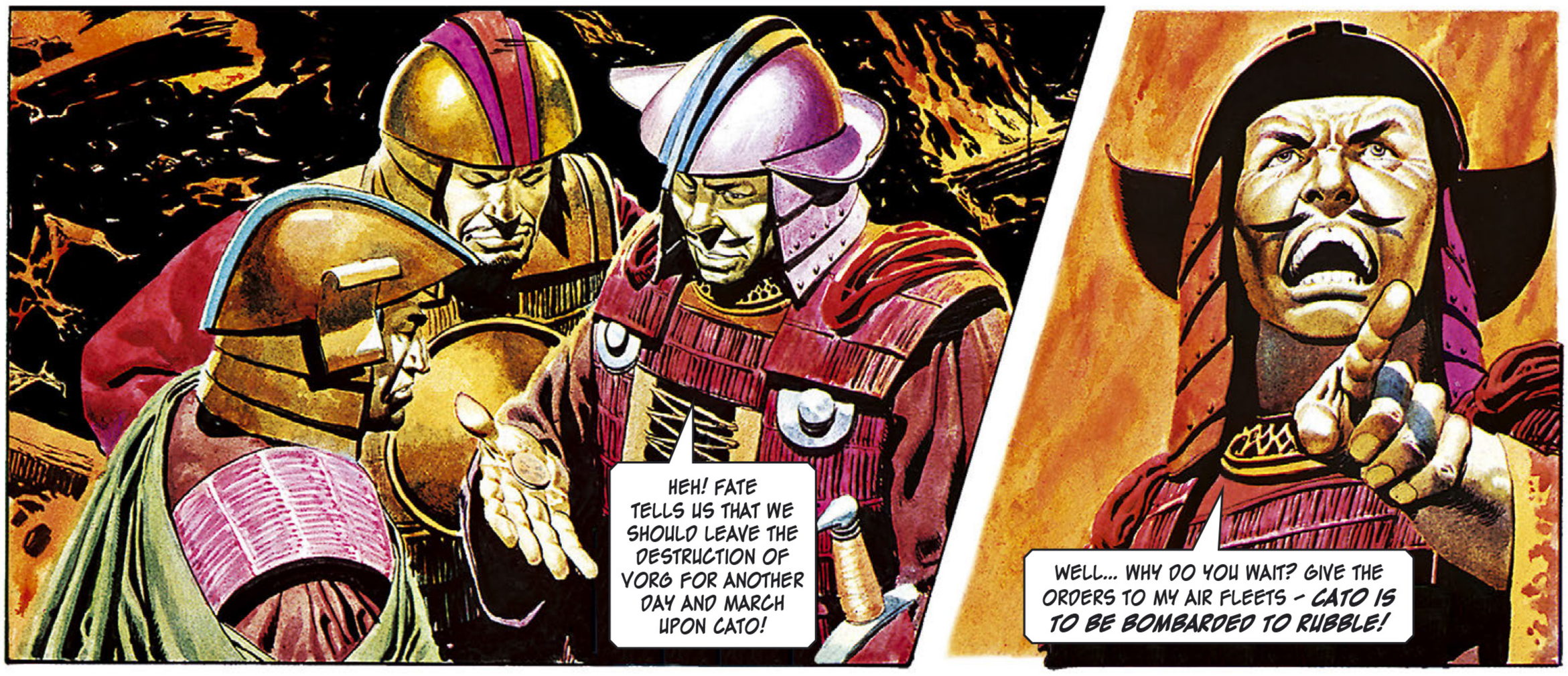
WHILE THIS WAS HAPPENING, THE AIR FLEETS OF THE VICIOUS LOKANS WERE POUNDING TO RUBBLE THE LAST REMAINS OF THE LOVELY CITY OF THE PEACE-LOVING THARVS... THE CITY THAT PERIC HAD BUILT AND LOVED.

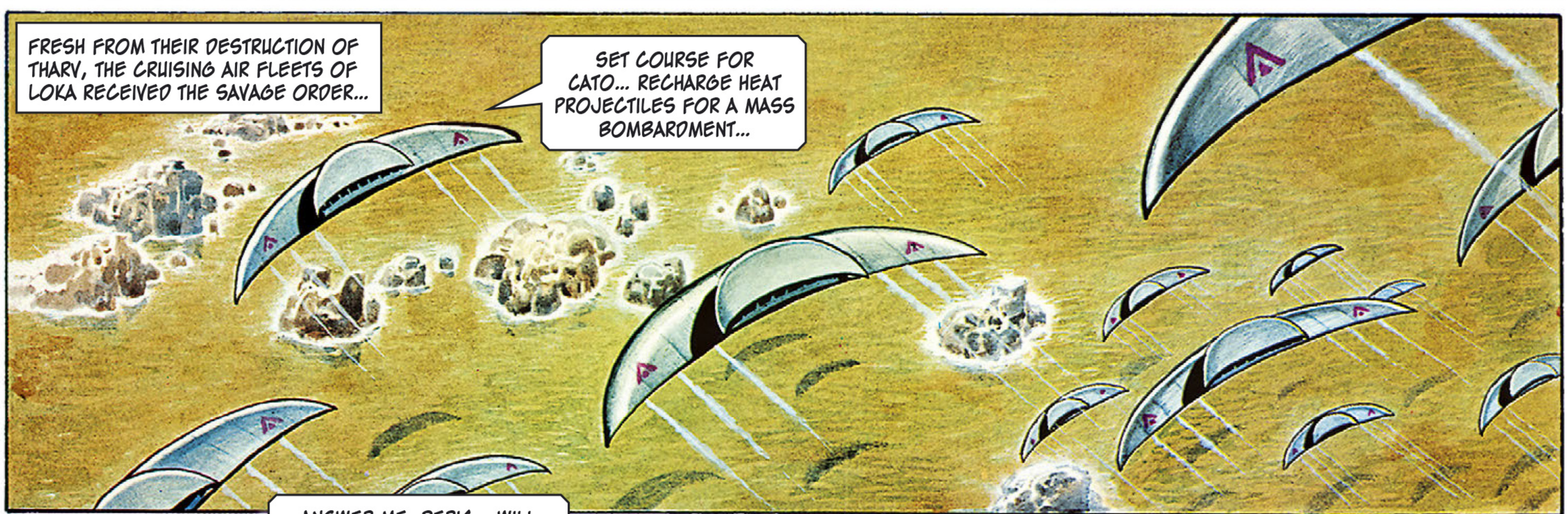
AND WITHIN THE CRUMBLING WALLS OF THE PALACE, THE ELITE GUARD OF THARV WERE EARNING DEATHLESS GLORY IN A LAST STAND AGAINST THE SWEEPING ASSAULT OF THE LOKAN GROUND FORCES...
OUR AMMUNITION IS ALL BUT GONE, COMMANDER!
THEN... OUR SWORDS... FIGHT TO THE LAST MAN... FOR THARV...

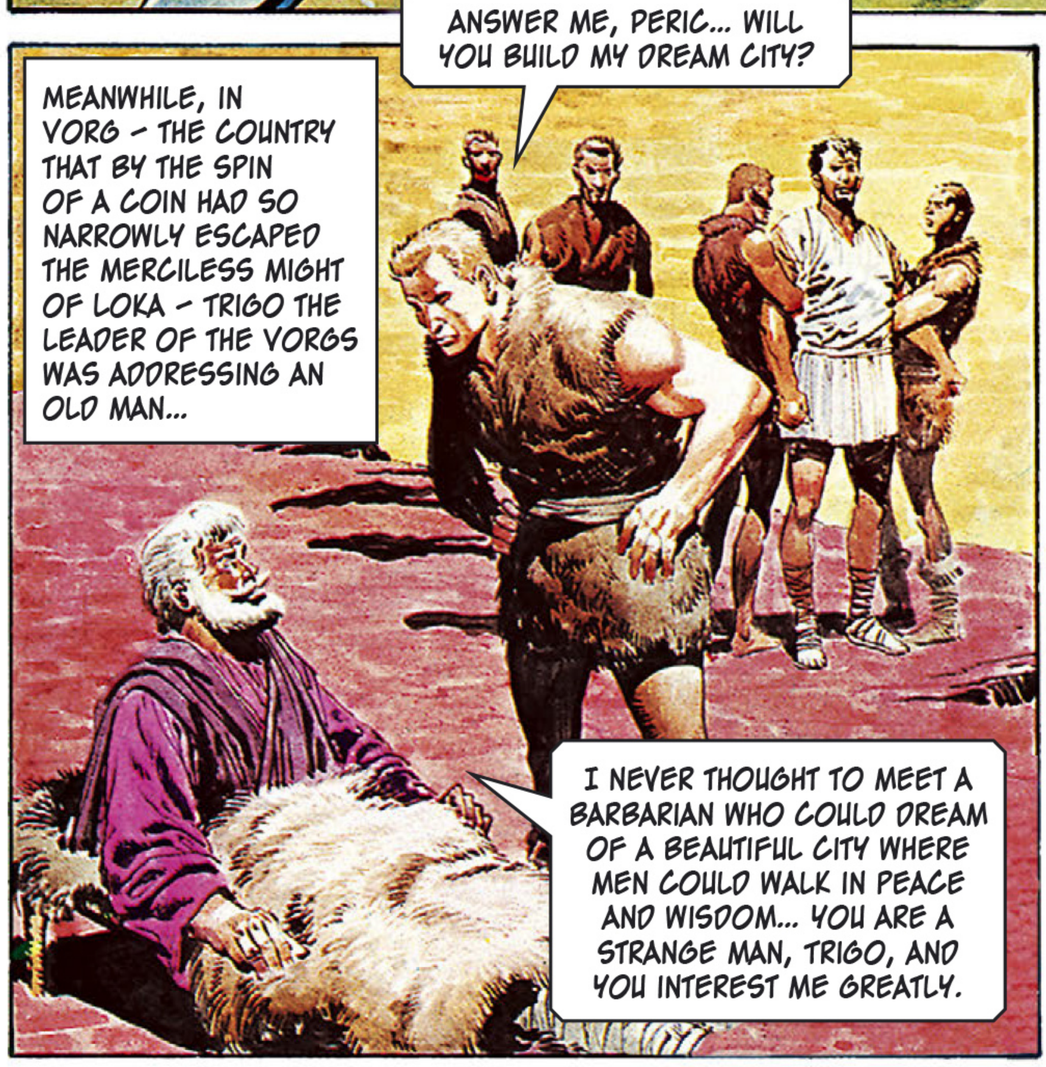

BY DAWN, IT WAS ALL OVER... AND ZORTH, THE LORD OF LOKA, FEASTED HIS EVIL EYES UPON THE DESTRUCTION HE HAD WROUGHT...
WHAT NEXT, ALL-HIGHEST...? DO WE MARCH ON VORG AND DESTROY THE BARBARIANS TOGETHER WITH THE THARVS WHO HAVE FLED THERE?

DRUNK WITH TRIUMPH, ZORTH COULD AFFORD TO JEST...
IT MATTERS LITTLE WHETHER WE FIRST OBLITERATE VORG... OR TURN OUR FACES THE OTHER WAY AND WIPE OUT THE COUNTRY OF CATO NEXT... SINCE WE WILL DESTROY BOTH IN OUR GOOD TIME...

HE FLIPPED A COIN IN THE AIR... A GOLD COIN, BEARING ON ONE SIDE HIS OWN HATEFUL COUNTENANCE AND ON THE OTHER THE CROSSED SWORDS OF LOKA...
WE WILL LET THE COIN DECIDE... IF MY HEAD LANDS UPPERMOST WE MARCH ON VORG!
THE JESTING TYRANT WAS NOT TO KNOW IT... BUT IN THAT BRIEF MOMENT OF TIME, THE FATE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WAS BEING DECIDED FOR A THOUSAND YEARS... ON THE SPIN OF A FATEFUL DISC OF GOLD!

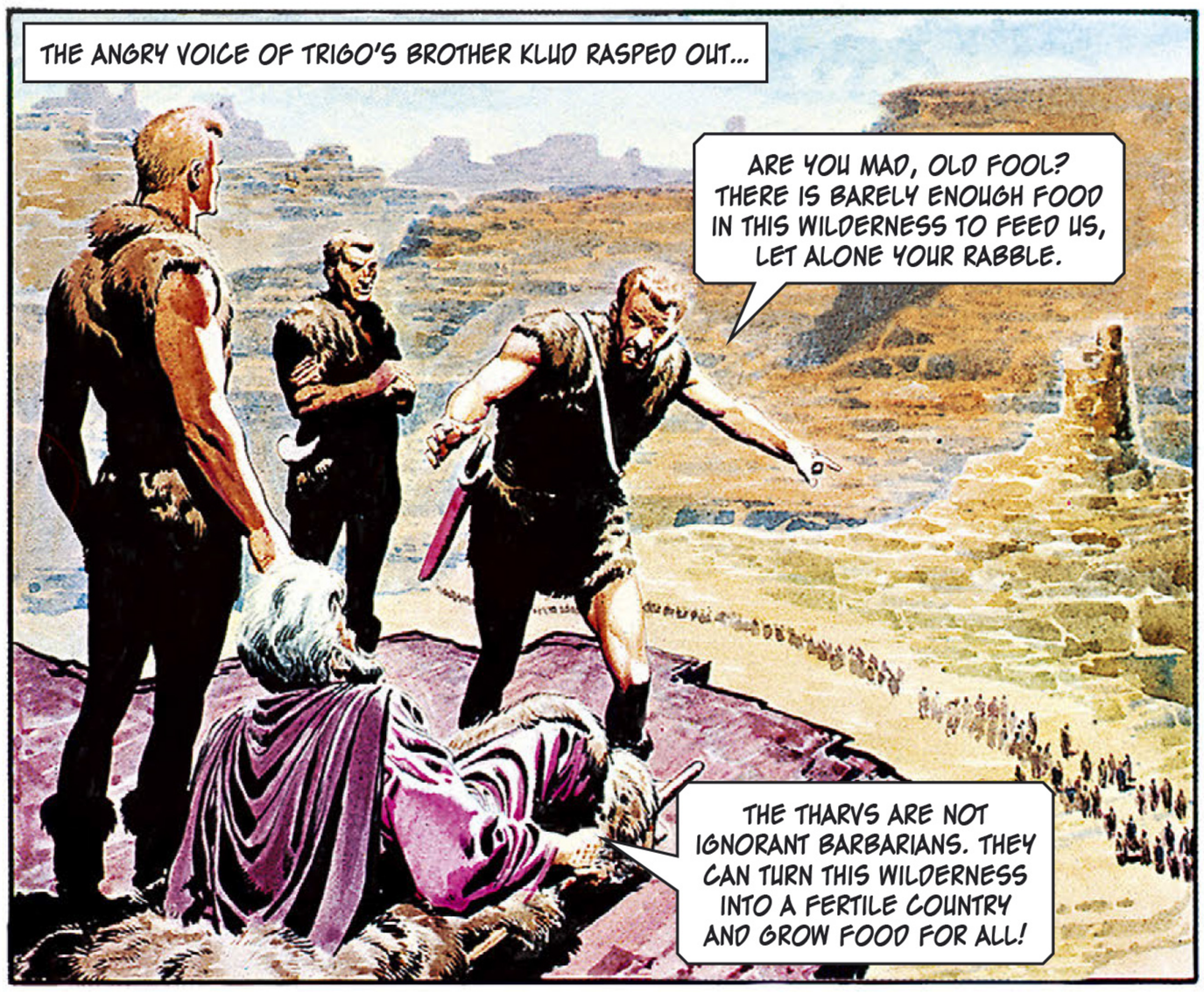

HEH! FATE TELLS US THAT WE SHOULD LEAVE THE DESTRUCTION OF VORG FOR ANOTHER DAY AND MARCH UPON CATO!
WELL... WHY DO YOU WAIT? GIVE THE ORDERS TO MY AIR FLEETS - CATO IS TO BE BOMBARDED TO RUBBLE!


FRESH FROM THEIR DESTRUCTION OF THARV, THE CRUISING AIR FLEETS OF LOKA RECEIVED THE SAVAGE ORDER...
SET COURSE FOR CATO... RECHARGE HEAT PROJECTILES FOR A MASS BOMBARDMENT...

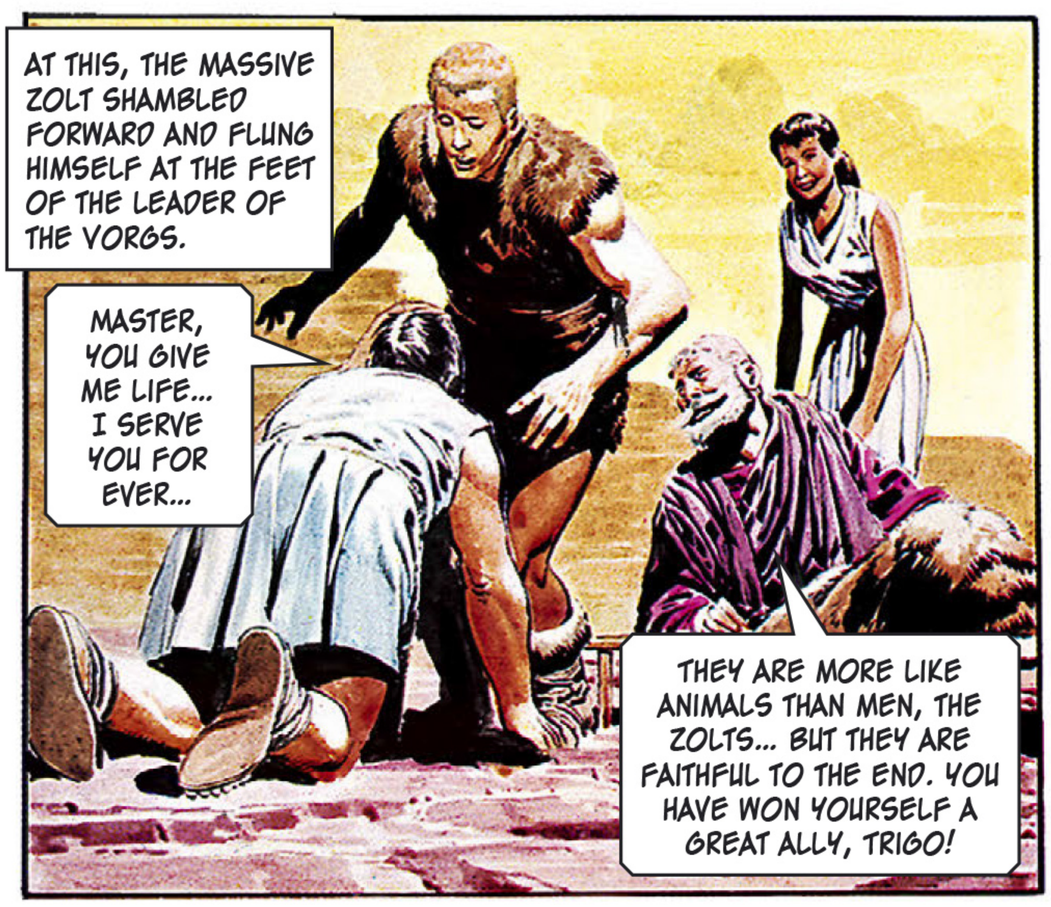

MEANWHILE, IN VORG - THE COUNTRY THAT BY THE SPIN OF A COIN HAD SO NARROWLY ESCAPED THE MERCILESS MIGHT OF LOKA - TRIGO THE LEADER OF THE VORGS WAS ADDRESSING AN OLD MAN...
ANSWER ME, PERIC... WILL YOU BUILD MY DREAM CITY?
I NEVER THOUGHT TO MEET A BARBARIAN WHO COULD DREAM OF A BEAUTIFUL CITY WHERE MEN COULD WALK IN PEACE AND WISDOM... YOU ARE A STRANGE MAN, TRIGO, AND YOU INTEREST ME GREATLY.

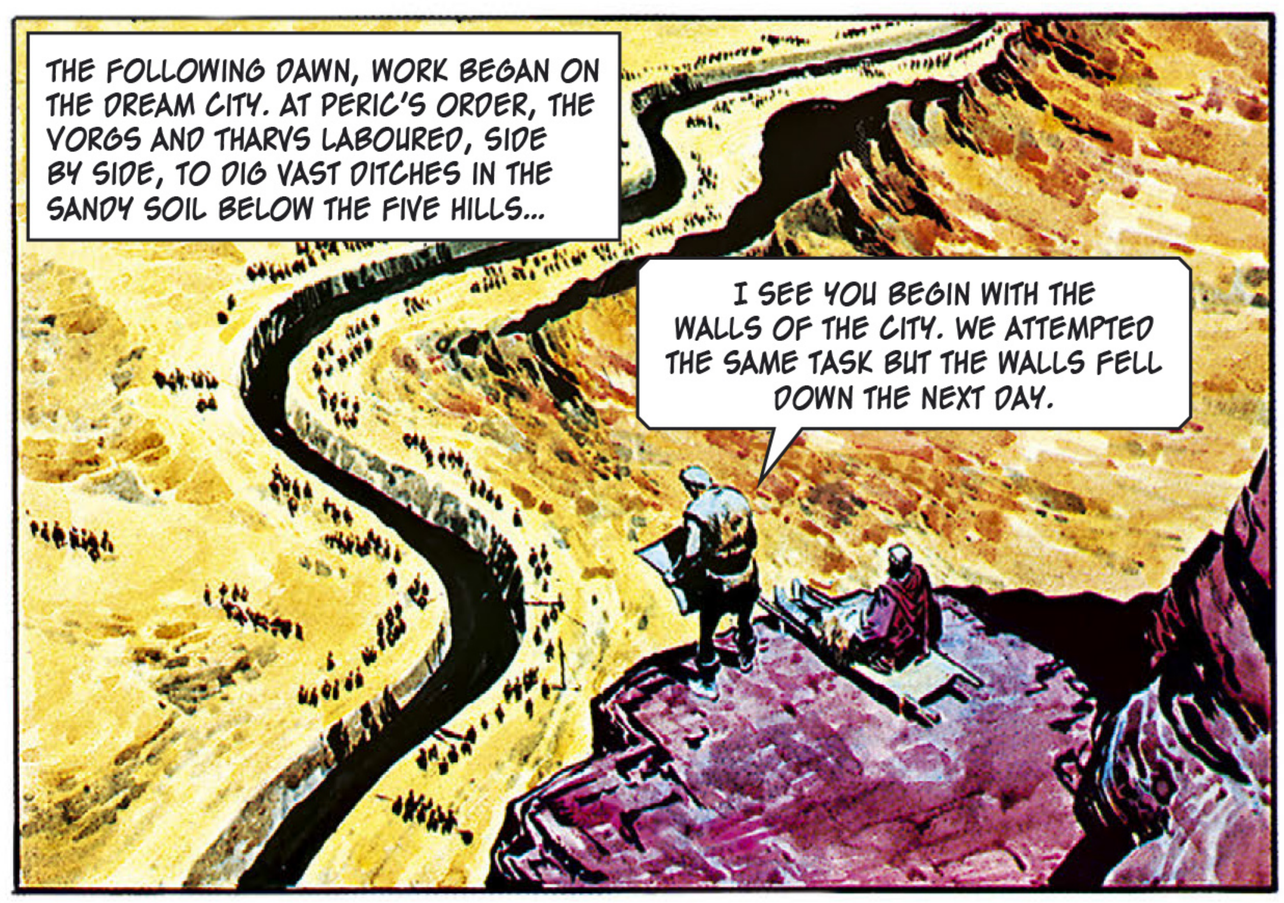
PERIC, THE GREAT ARCHITECT OF THE NOW RUINED COUNTRY OF THARV, MUSED ALOUD.
I HAVE THE PLANS IN MY HEAD FOR SUCH A CITY... IT HAS BEEN MY DREAM, TOO, FOR MANY YEARS. WHAT A STRANGE TURN OF FATE IF I SHOULD BE DESTINED TO BUILD IT ON THE FIVE HILLS OF VORG.

TRIGO BROKE IN IMPATIENTLY...
THEN YOU AGREE?
YES, I WILL BUILD YOUR CITY, TRIGO... ON CONDITION THAT YOU ALLOW MY UNFORTUNATE FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN OF THARV TO MAKE THEIR HOME HERE IN VORG!


THE ANGRY VOICE OF TRIGO'S BROTHER KLUD RASPED OUT...
ARE YOU MAD, OLD FOOL? THERE IS BARELY ENOUGH FOOD IN THIS WILDERNESS TO FEED US, LET ALONE YOUR RABBLE.
THE THARVS ARE NOT IGNORANT BARBARIANS. THEY CAN TURN THIS WILDERNESS INTO A FERTILE COUNTRY AND GROW FOOD FOR ALL!

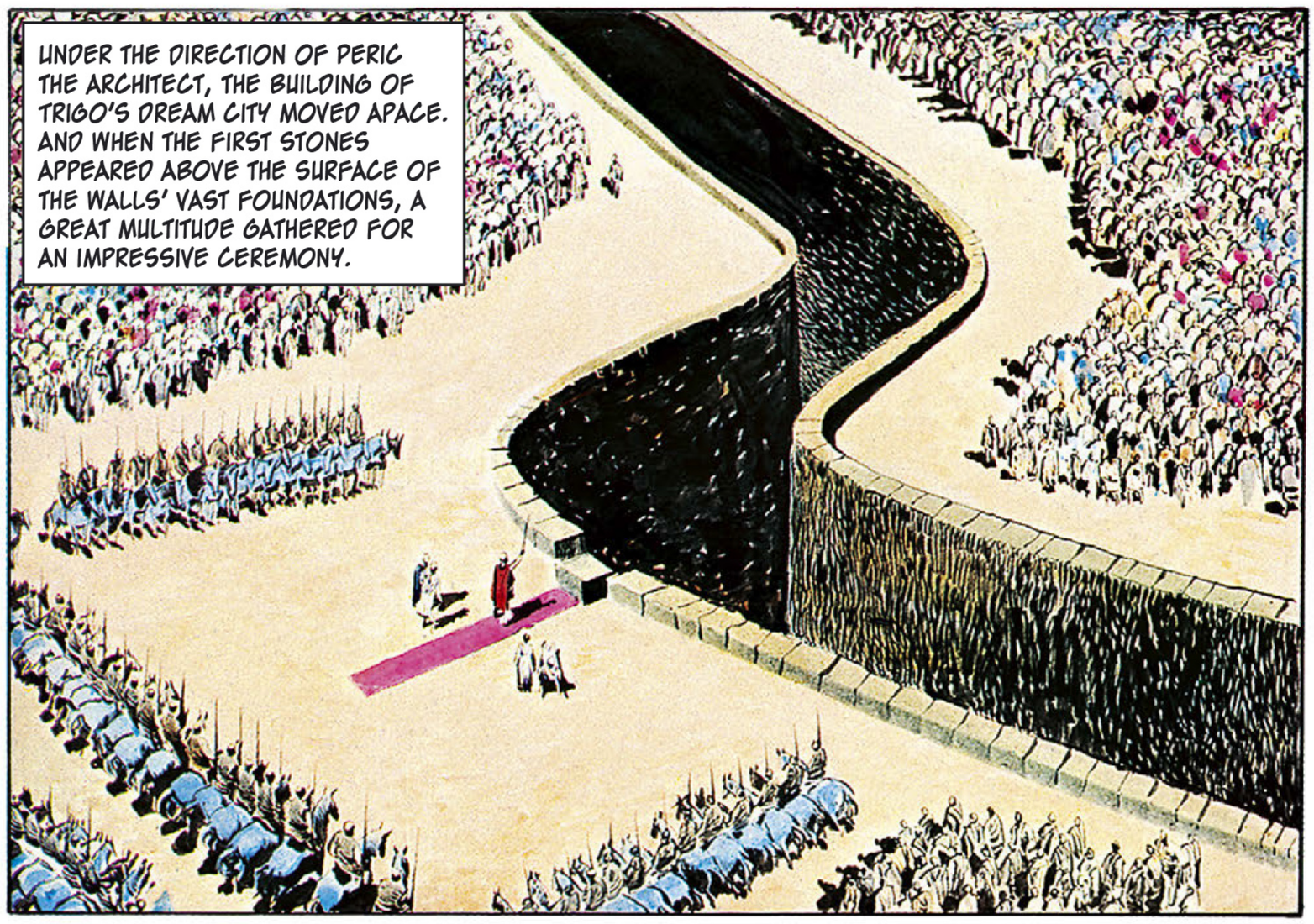
AND PERIC HAD ONE MORE CONDITION...
AND I ASK THE LIFE OF MY ZOLT SLAVE, WHOM YOUR BROTHER HAS CONDEMNED TO DEATH!
I AGREE... TO BOTH YOUR CONDITIONS, PERIC!


AT THIS, THE MASSIVE ZOLT SHAMBLED FORWARD AND FLUNG HIMSELF AT THE FEET OF THE LEADER OF THE VORGS.
MASTER, YOU GIVE ME LIFE... I SERVE YOU FOR EVER...
THEY ARE MORE LIKE ANIMALS THAN MEN, THE ZOLTS... BUT THEY ARE FAITHFUL TO THE END. YOU HAVE WON YOURSELF A GREAT ALLY, TRIGO!

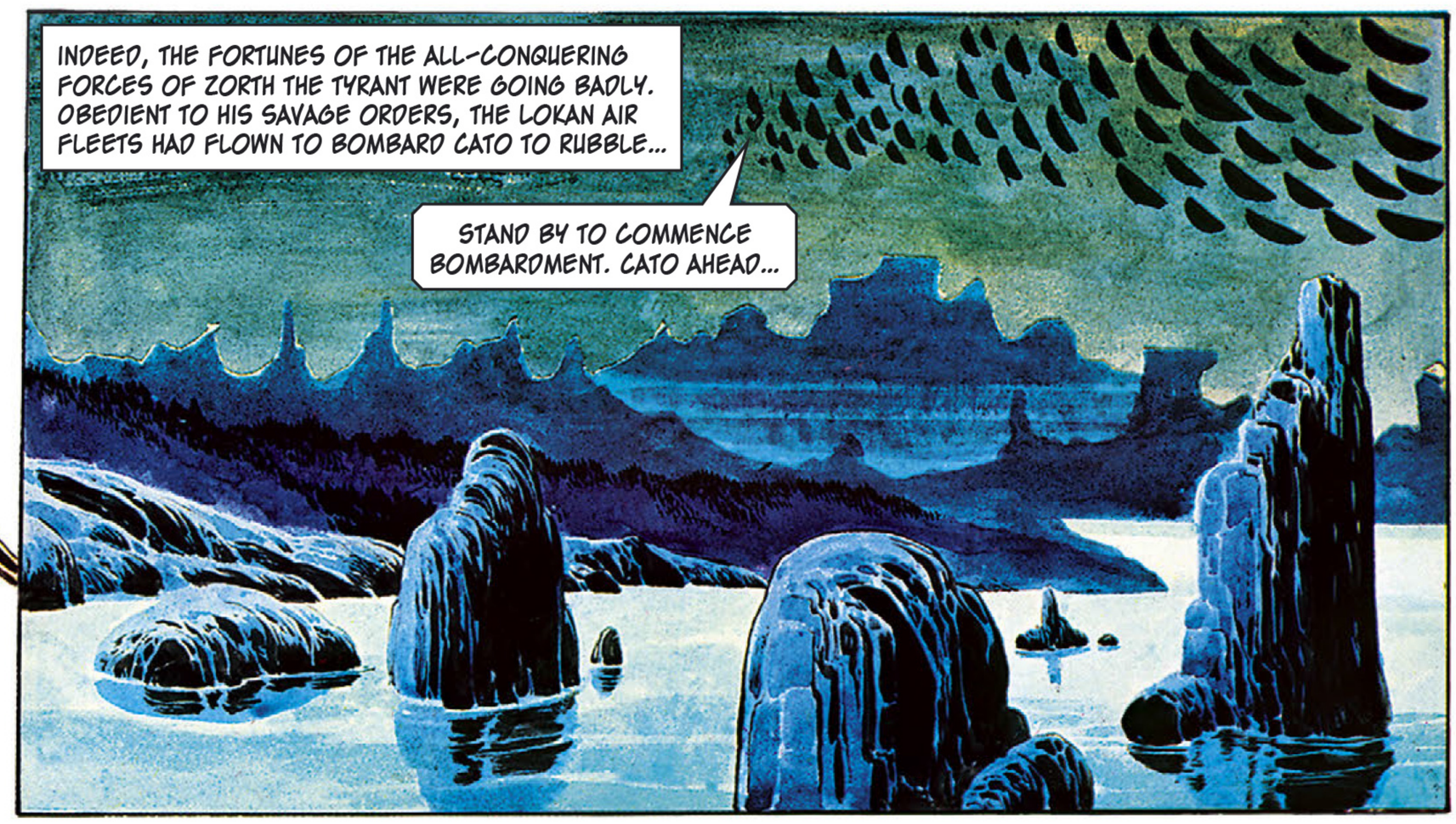

THE FOLLOWING DAWN, WORK BEGAN ON THE DREAM CITY. AT PERIC'S ORDER, THE VORGS AND THARVS LABOURED, SIDE BY SIDE, TO DIG VAST DITCHES IN THE SANDY SOIL BELOW THE FIVE HILLS...
I SEE YOU BEGIN WITH THE WALLS OF THE CITY. WE ATTEMPTED THE SAME TASK BUT THE WALLS FELL DOWN THE NEXT DAY.

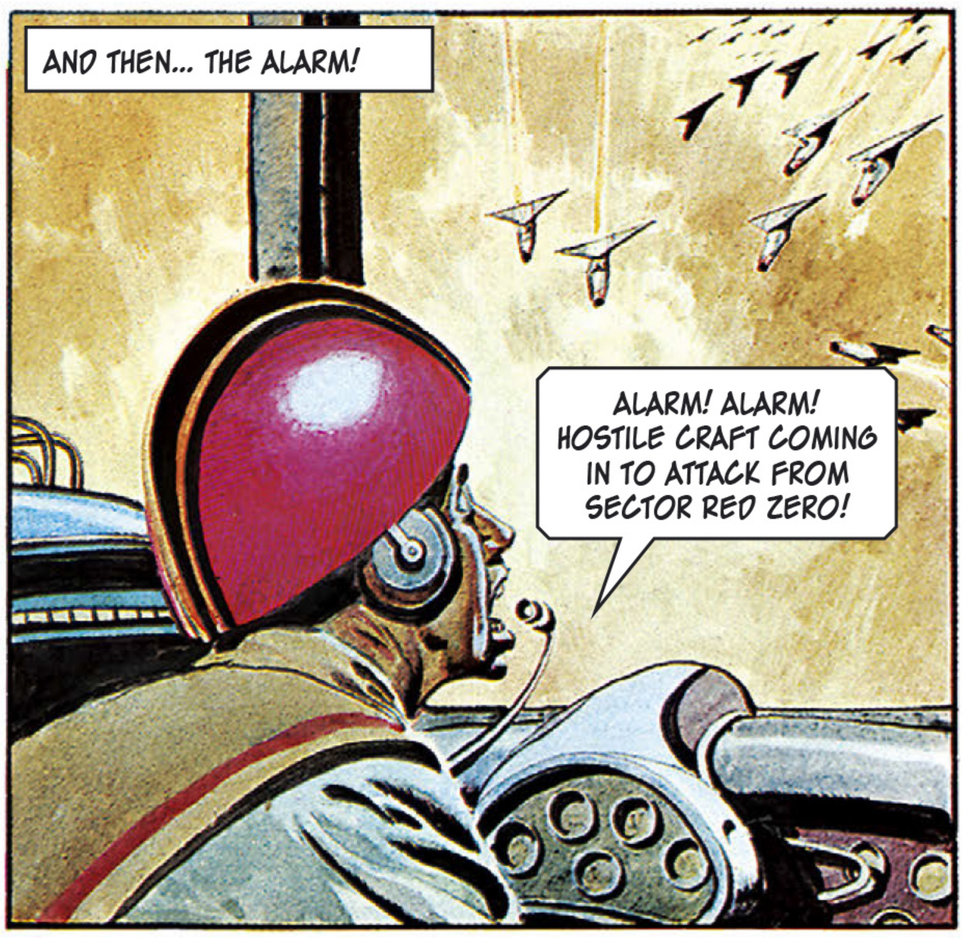
WE ARE BUILDING ON SANDY SOIL. FOR EVERY STONE THAT APPEARS ABOVE THE GROUND, ANOTHER STONE MUST BE SET UNDER THE GROUND TO SUPPORT IT. YOUR CITY WILL NOT BE BUILT IN A DAY, TRIGO!

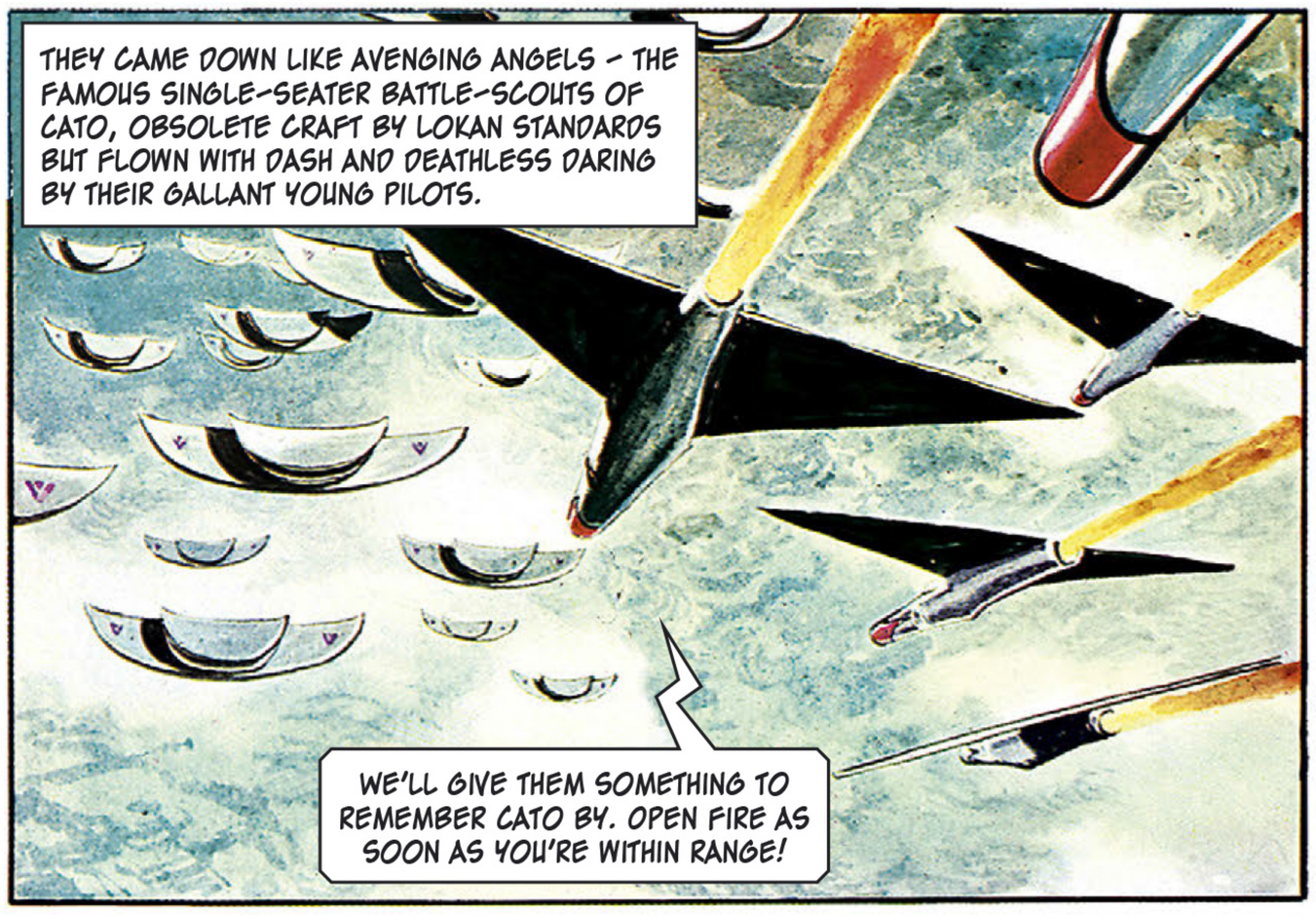
TRIGO'S BROTHER KLUD WATCHED FROM AFAR... WITH JEALOUSY EATING INTO HIS CUNNING BRAIN.
NO, MY FINE BROTHER... YOU GROW TOO POWERFUL AND YOU MUST BE STOPPED – AND I THINK I KNOW HOW THIS CAN BE DONE!

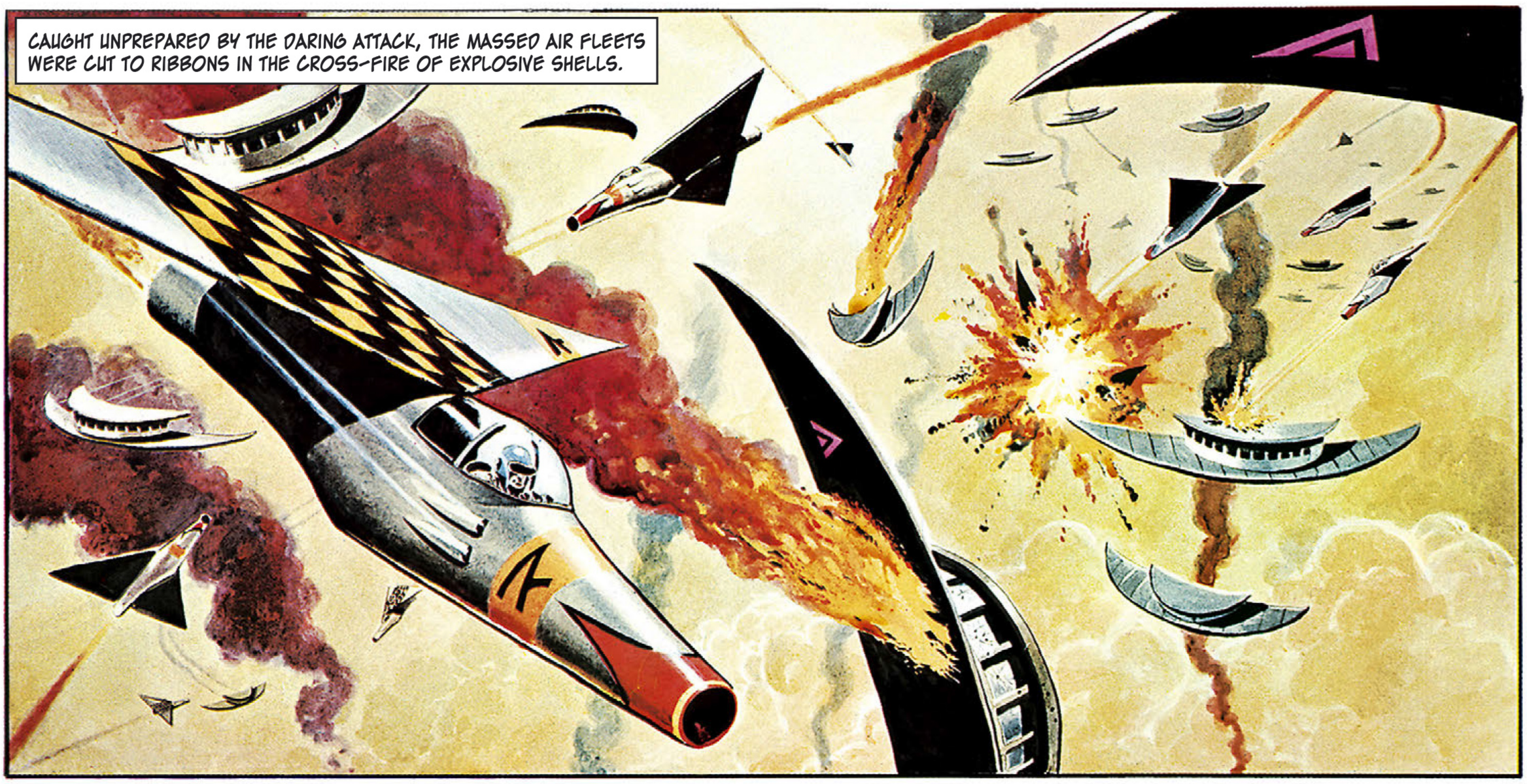


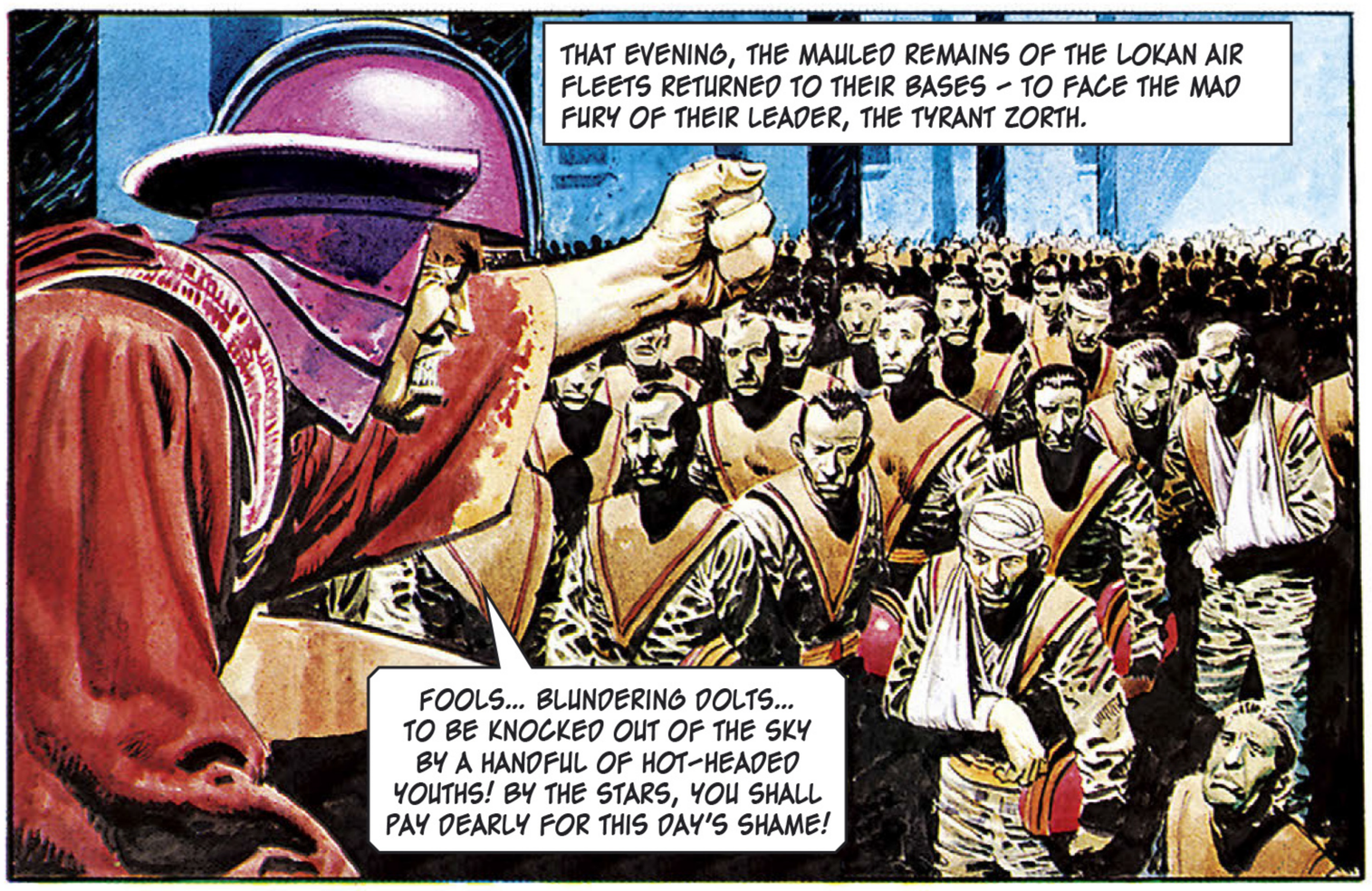
AND KLUD THOUGHT TO HIMSELF...




AND THEN... THE ALARM!
ALARM! ALARM! HOSTILE CRAFT COMING IN TO ATTACK FROM SECTOR RED ZERO!


THEY CAME DOWN LIKE AVENGING ANGELS – THE FAMOUS SINGLE-SEATER BATTLE-SCOUTS OF CATO, OBSOLETE CRAFT BY LOKAN STANDARDS BUT FLOWN WITH DASH AND DEATHLESS DARING BY THEIR GALLANT YOUNG PILOTS.
WE'LL GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO REMEMBER CATO BY. OPEN FIRE AS SOON AS YOU'RE WITHIN RANGE!


CAUGHT UNPREPARED BY THE DARING ATTACK, THE MASSED AIR FLEETS WERE CUT TO RIBBONS IN THE CROSS-FIRE OF EXPLOSIVE SHELLS.


THAT EVENING, THE MAULED REMAINS OF THE LOKAN AIR FLEETS RETURNED TO THEIR BASES – TO FACE THE MAD FURY OF THEIR LEADER, THE TYRANT ZORTH.
FOOLS... BLUNDERING DOLTS... TO BE KNOCKED OUT OF THE SKY BY A HANDFUL OF HOT-HEADED YOUTHS! BY THE STARS, YOU SHALL PAY DEARLY FOR THIS DAY'S SHAME!

GUARDS! SEE TO IT THAT ONE IN EVERY TEN OF THESE SHRINKING CURS IS LED OUT TO INSTANT EXECUTION...
...AND ORDER MY GROUND FORCES TO MARCH UPON CATO!

AND SO, THE GROUND FORCES OF ZORTH, KING OF THE LOKANS, MOVED INTO CATO. IN THE FIRST BATTLE THEY ANNIHILATED THE ROYAL GUARDS, THE CREAM OF THAT LITTLE COUNTRY'S ARMY...

AND THEN THE DEADLY WAR MACHINES OF LOKA MOVED FORWARD ACROSS THE WIDE PLAIN OF CATO, TOWARDS THE PROUD CAPITAL CITY THAT LAY AT THEIR MERCY ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE BEYOND.

OPEN FIRE UPON THE CITY AS SOON AS YOU RECEIVE THE ORDER... POUND IT TO DUST!

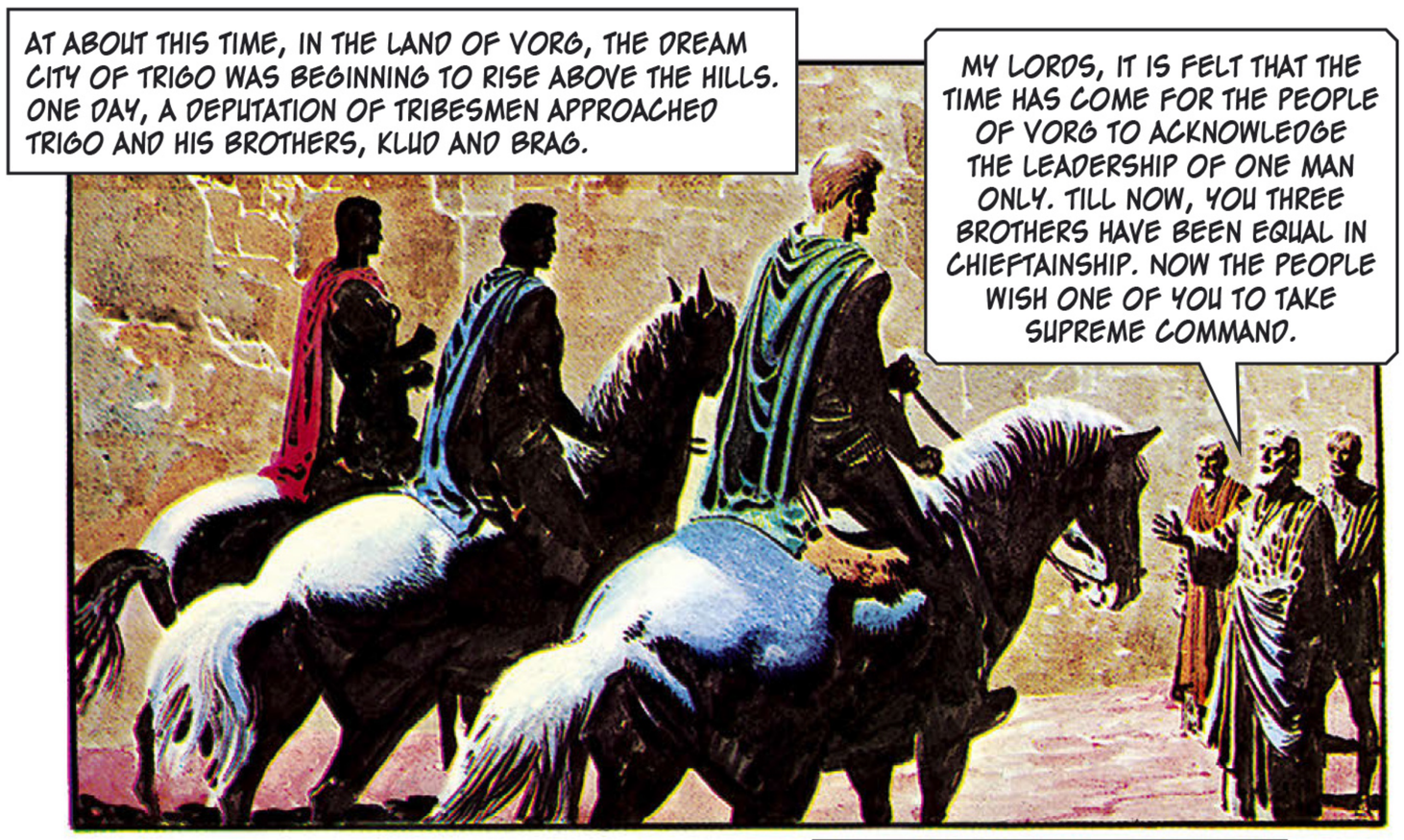
HIGH ABOVE THE GREAT DAM THAT SPLIT THE MOUNTAIN RANGE IN HALF, THE CHIEF CAPTAINS OF CATO SAW THE APPROACHING DOOM... AND MADE THEIR TERRIBLE DECISION...

IF CATO MUST PERISH, CATO'S ENEMIES SHALL PERISH WITH HER!

LET IT BE DONE... DESTROY THE DAM!

AT THE TOUCH OF A LEVER, THE VAST WALL OF THE DAM ERUPTED LIKE A VOLCANO, FILLING THE AIR WITH EAR-SHATTERING SOUND...

A VAST OCEAN OF WATER SURGED OUT OF THE SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS AND SWEPT IN AN ALL-ENGULFING WAVE ACROSS THE PLAIN OF CATO. THE LOKANS SAW IT COMING AND WERE FROZEN IN TERROR. BEFORE A SINGLE WAR MACHINE COULD TURN TO FLEE, THE MIGHT OF LOKA WAS CAUGHT UP IN A MAELSTROM...

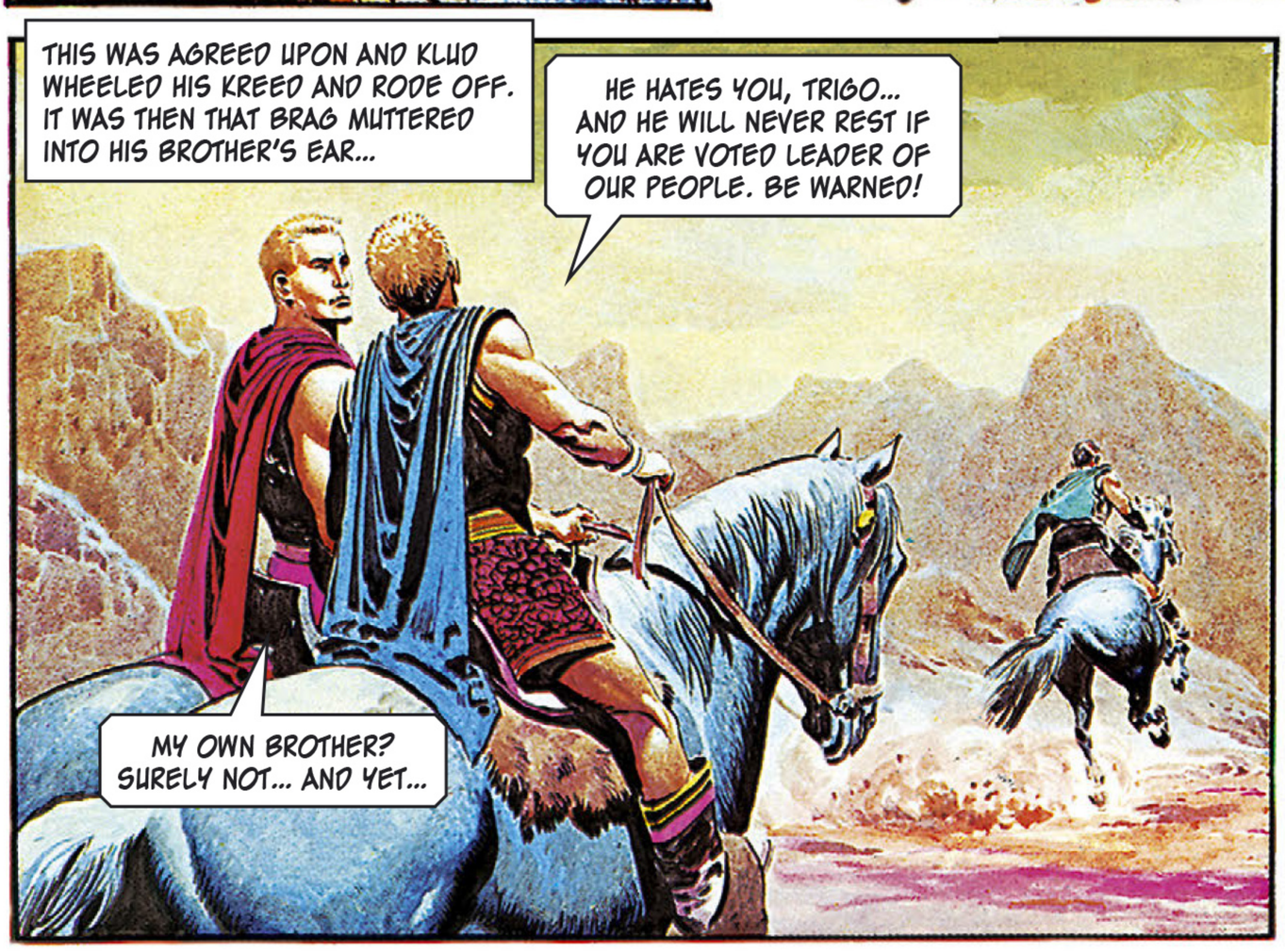

AT ABOUT THIS TIME, IN THE LAND OF VORG, THE DREAM CITY OF TRIGO WAS BEGINNING TO RISE ABOVE THE HILLS. ONE DAY, A DEPUTATION OF TRIBESMEN APPROACHED TRIGO AND HIS BROTHERS, KLUD AND BRAG.
MY LORDS, IT IS FELT THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE PEOPLE OF VORG TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE LEADERSHIP OF ONE MAN ONLY. TILL NOW, YOU THREE BROTHERS HAVE BEEN EQUAL IN CHIEFTAINSHIP. NOW THE PEOPLE WISH ONE OF YOU TO TAKE SUPREME COMMAND.

ALL EYES WERE UPON TRIGO FOR, AS FOUNDER OF THE DREAM CITY, HE HAD THE GREATEST RIGHT TO SUPREME LEADERSHIP. HIS BROTHER BRAG SAID AS MUCH...
FOR MY PART I GIVE UP ALL CLAIMS TO CHIEFTAINSHIP TO SERVE MY BROTHER, TRIGO.
AND I WILL DO NO SUCH THING!

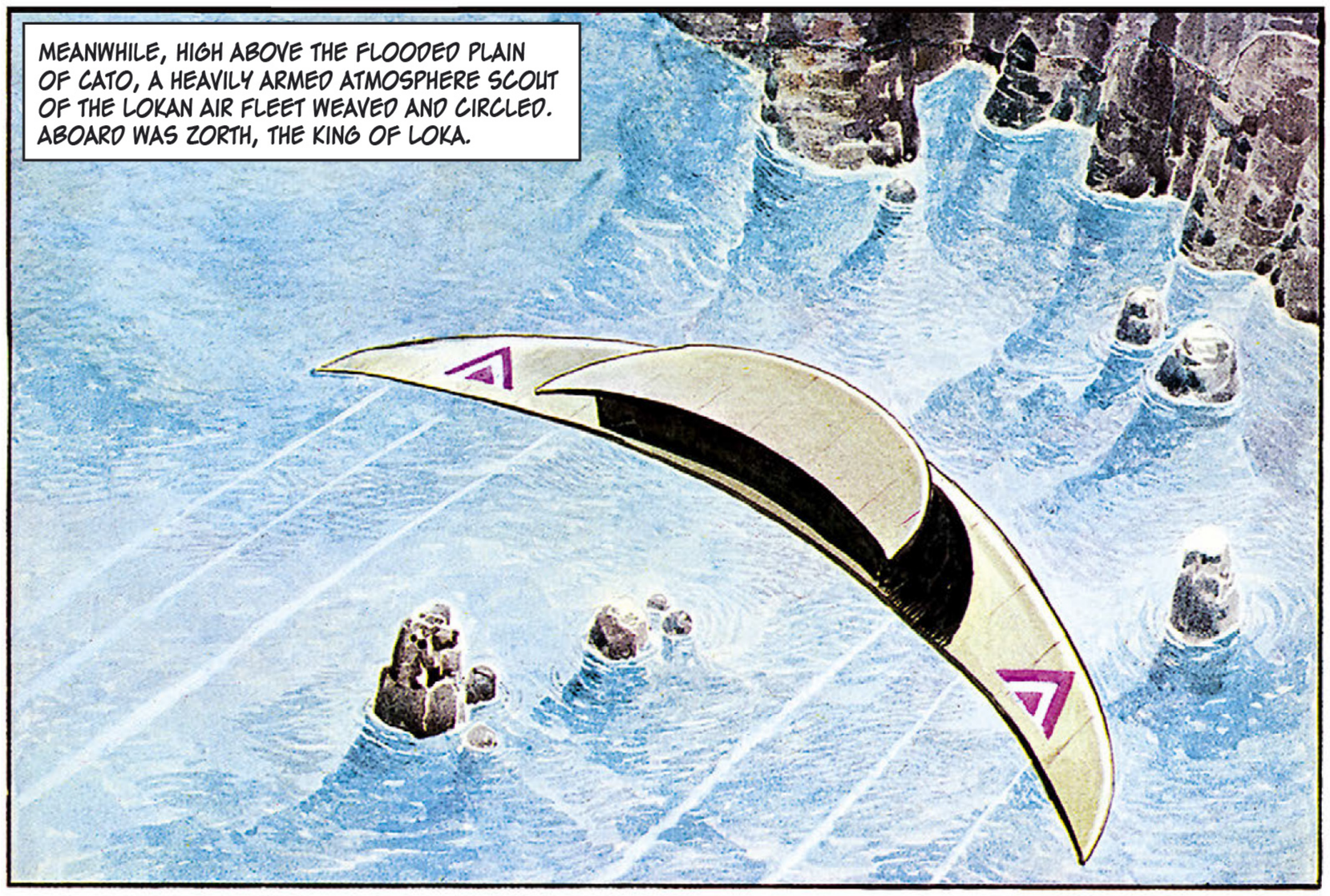
I WAS BORN A CHIEF LIKE HIM... THE SON OF A CHIEF. IF THE PEOPLE OF VORG WISH IT, LET THEM TAKE MY CHIEFTAINSHIP AWAY FROM ME. I WILL NEVER GIVE IT UP OF MY OWN ACCORD!
WELL SPOKEN, BROTHER.

TRIGO DISMOUNTED AND STOPPED TO PICK UP THREE SMALL STONES FROM THE SANDY SOIL...
THE PEOPLE OF VORG SHALL DECIDE. LET BLACK BE KLUD'S COLOUR, RED THE COLOUR FOR BRAG AND WHITE FOR ME...
WHAT FOOLISHNESS IS THIS?

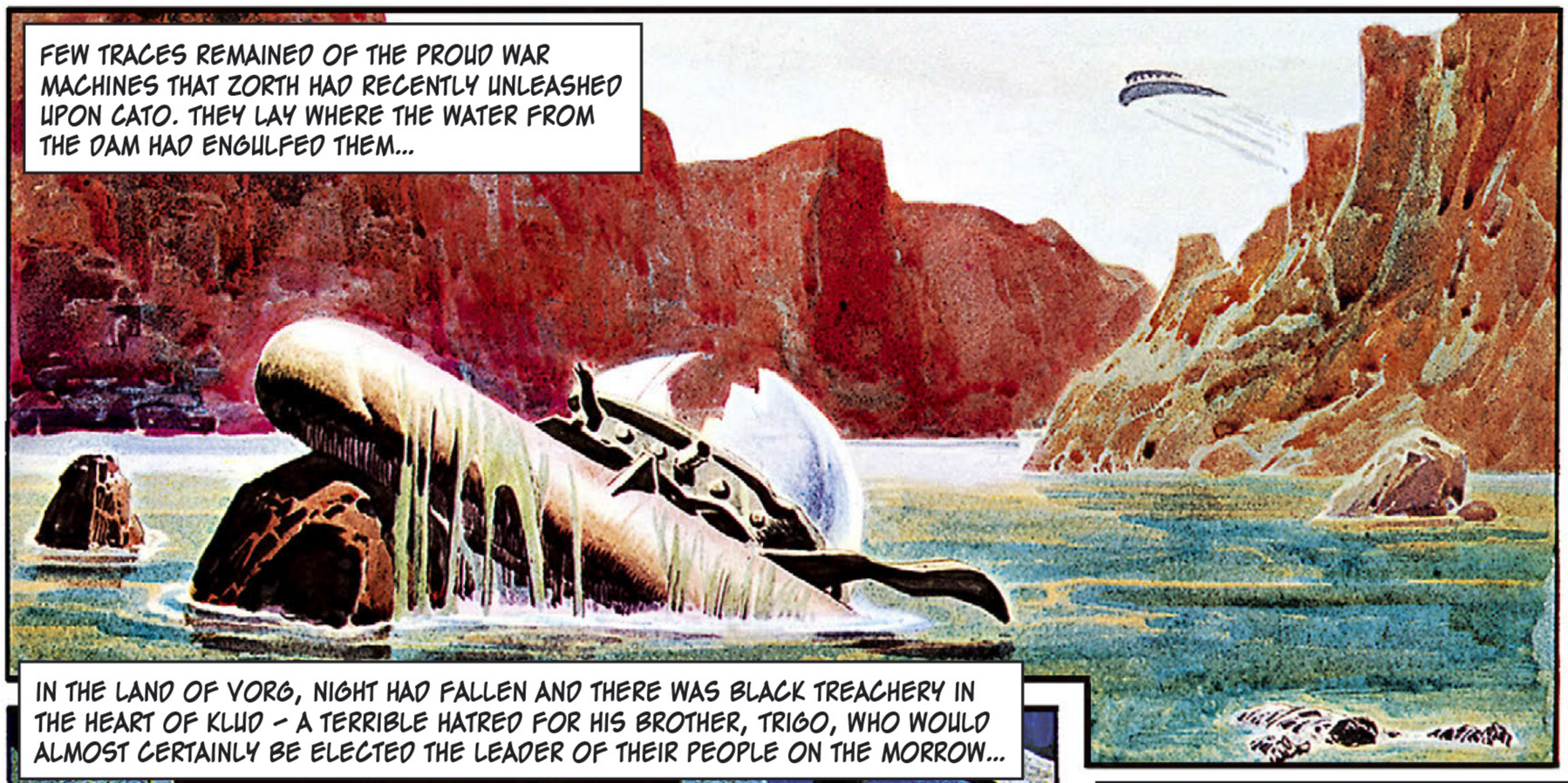
FOR ANSWER, TRIGO POINTED TO A SHALLOW VALLEY WHOSE FLOOR WAS SMOOTH WITH DRIFTED SAND.
TONIGHT, LET EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD OF VORG TAKE A STONE THE COLOUR OF HIS OR HER CHOICE AND CAST IT INTO THE VALLEY. IN THE MORNING WE SHALL SEE WHO IS TO BE THE LEADER OF OUR PEOPLE!


THIS WAS AGREED UPON AND KLUD WHEELED HIS KREED AND RODE OFF. IT WAS THEN THAT BRAG MUTTERED INTO HIS BROTHER'S EAR...
HE HATES YOU, TRIGO... AND HE WILL NEVER REST IF YOU ARE VOTED LEADER OF OUR PEOPLE. BE WARNED!
MY OWN BROTHER? SURELY NOT... AND YET...

THAT NIGHT, IN HIS RICHLY-HUNG TENT, KLUD CAME TO A TERRIBLE DECISION. TAKING HIS KILLING KNIFE, HE DIPPED THE POINT INTO A GOBLET OF YELLOW FLUID. THIS WAS VENOM FROM A SLUNK... THE DEADLY SERPENT OF THE VORG DESERT.
LET THE VALLEY BE FILLED WITH WHITE STONES IN THE MORNING... HE SHALL NOT LIVE TO ENJOY HIS GREATNESS!

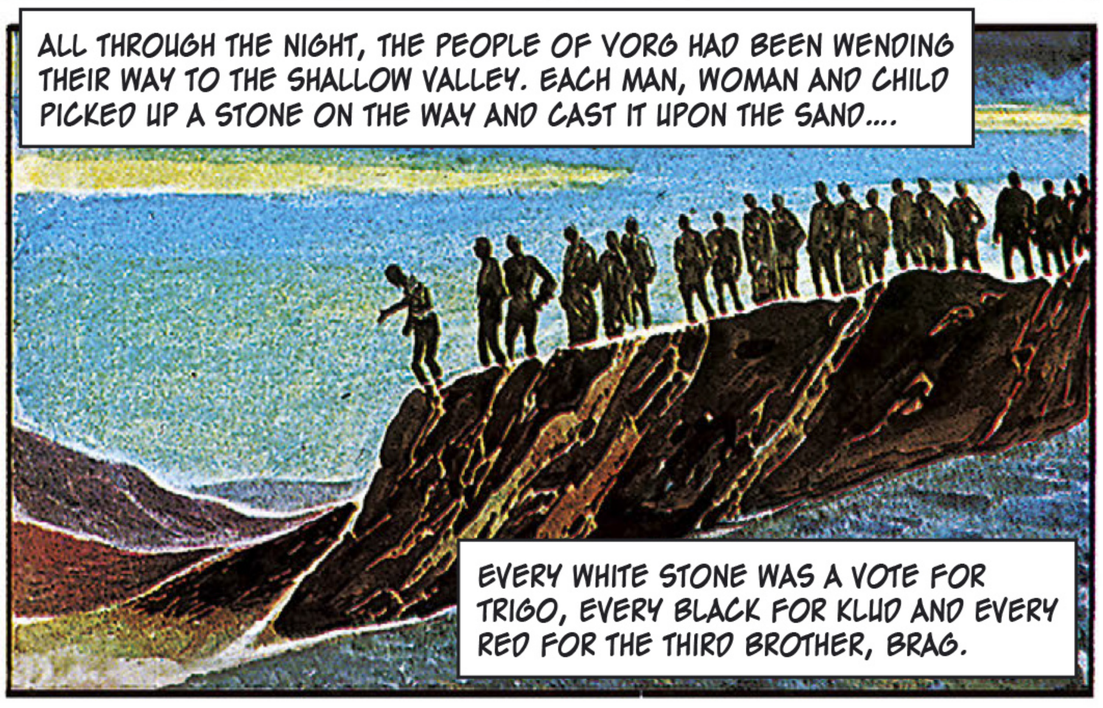

MEANWHILE, HIGH ABOVE THE FLOODED PLAIN OF CATO, A HEAVILY ARMED ATMOSPHERE SCOUT OF THE LOKAN AIR FLEET WEAVED AND CIRCLED. ABOARD WAS ZORTH, THE KING OF LOKA.

FIRST MY AIR FLEET AND NOW MY GROUND FORCES, SMASHED AND POUNDED TO WRECKAGE BY THOSE ACCURSED WRETCHES OF CATO...


FEW TRACES REMAINED OF THE PROUD WAR MACHINES THAT ZORTH HAD RECENTLY UNLEASHED UPON CATO. THEY LAY WHERE THE WATER FROM THE DAM HAD ENGULFED THEM...

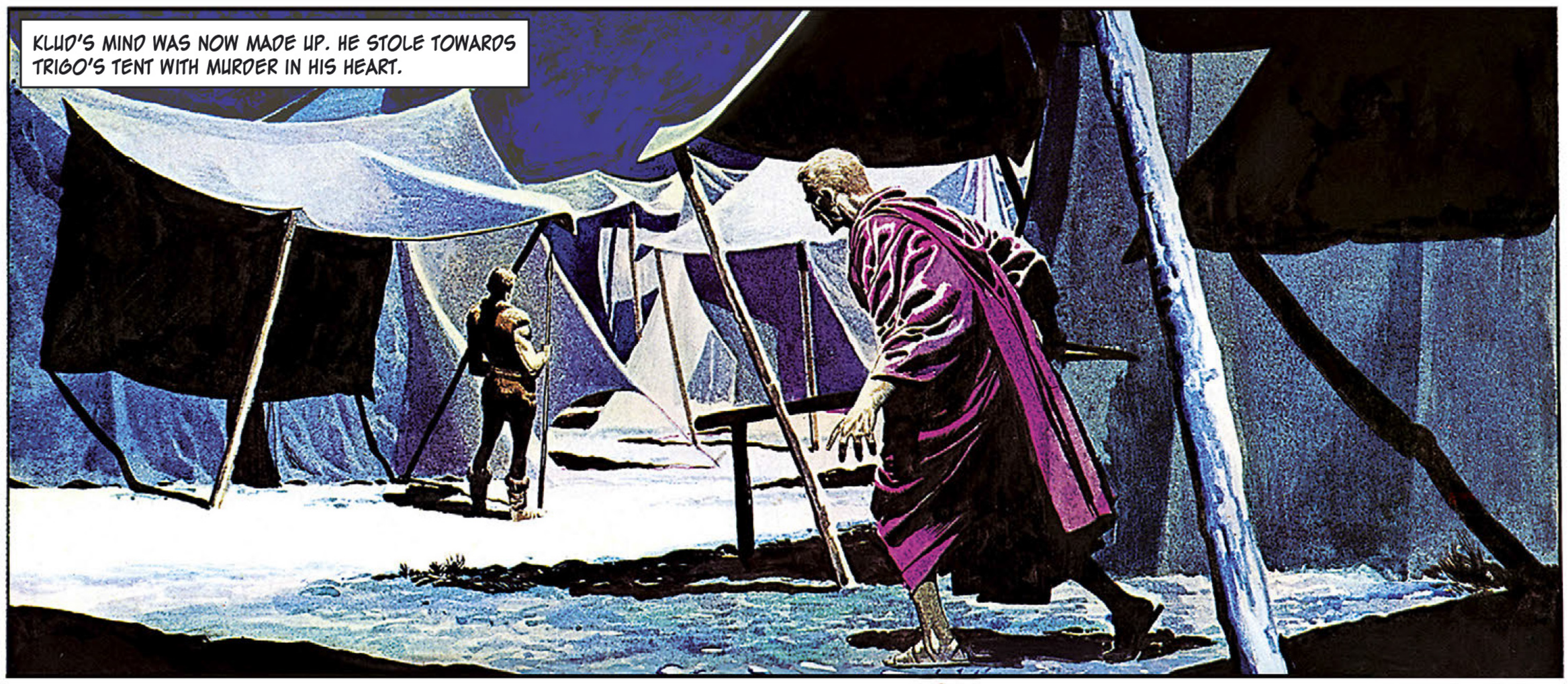
IS THERE NOBODY I CAN TRUST TO OBEY MY COMMANDS? BY ALL THE STARS, I WOULD HEAP HALF THE TREASURES OF LOKA UPON THE MAN WHO COULD SERVE ME WELL!

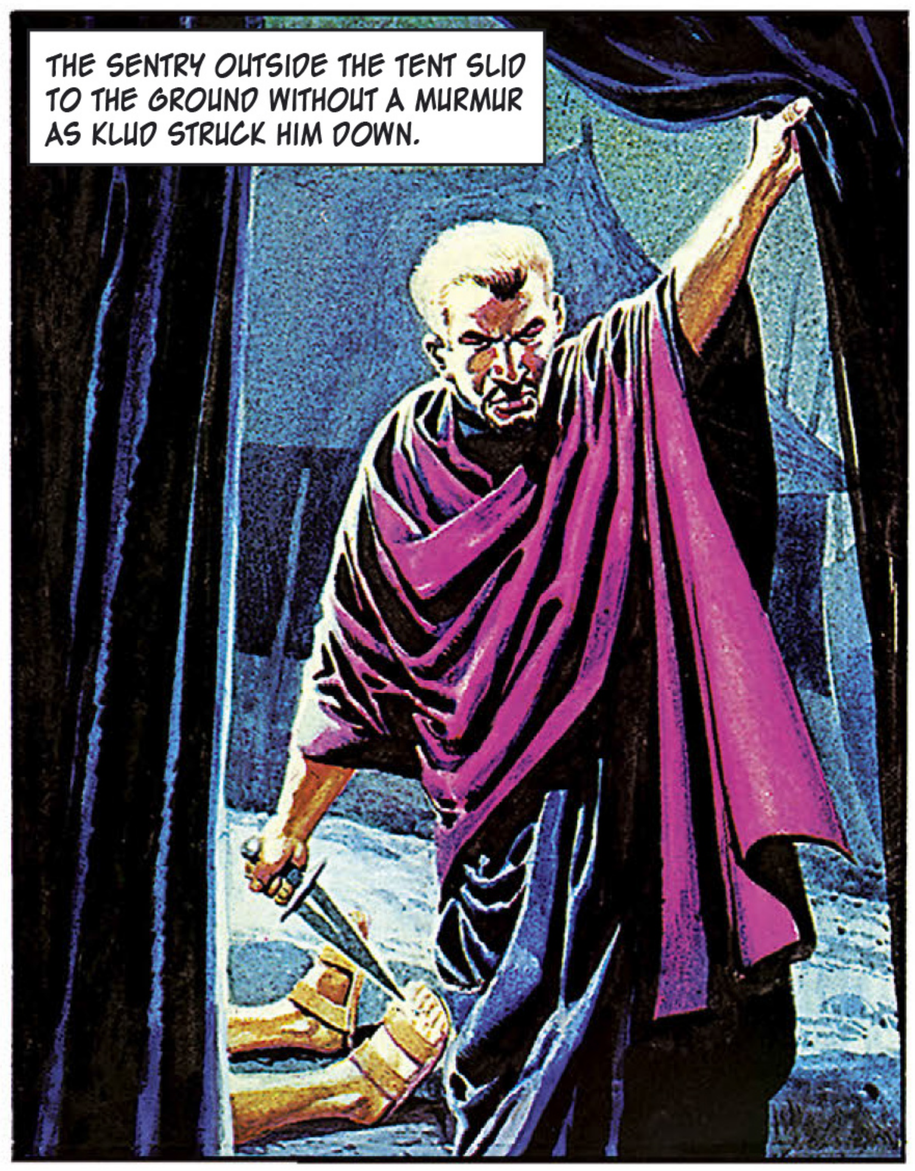
IN THE LAND OF VORG, NIGHT HAD FALLEN AND THERE WAS BLACK TREACHERY IN THE HEART OF KLUD – A TERRIBLE HATRED FOR HIS BROTHER, TRIGO, WHO WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE ELECTED THE LEADER OF THEIR PEOPLE ON THE MORROW...
FIRST, I WILL SATISFY MYSELF THAT THOSE FOOLS INDEED INTEND TO ELECT TRIGO... AND THEN...

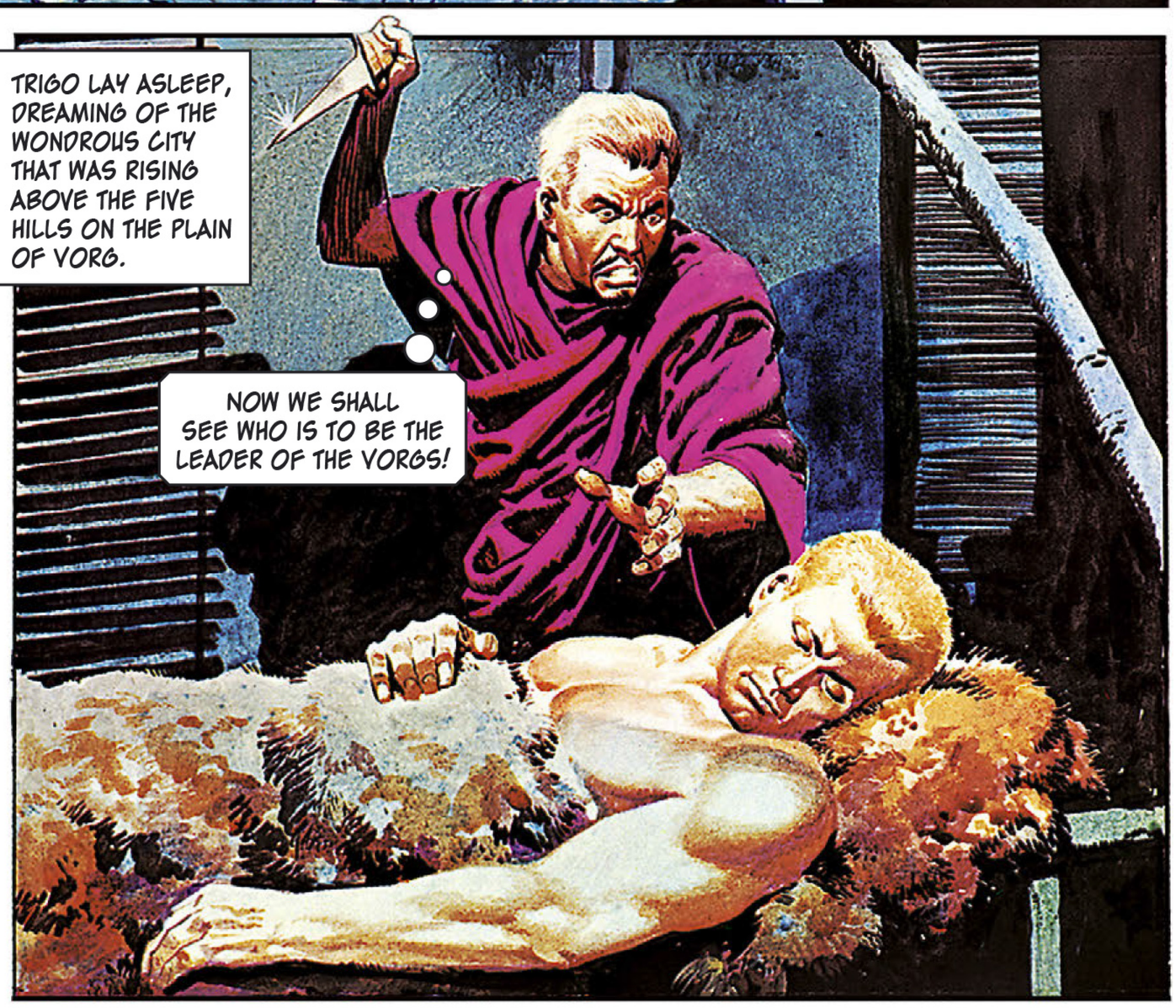

ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT, THE PEOPLE OF VORG HAD BEEN WENDING THEIR WAY TO THE SHALLOW VALLEY. EACH MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD PICKED UP A STONE ON THE WAY AND CAST IT UPON THE SAND....
EVERY WHITE STONE WAS A VOTE FOR TRIGO, EVERY BLACK FOR KLUD AND EVERY RED FOR THE THIRD BROTHER, BRAG.

SHROUDED IN HIS CONCEALING CLOAK, KLUD REACHED THE VALLEY UNRECOGNISED AND LOOKED DOWN. HIS MEAN EYES NARROWED IN FURY TO SEE THE PLACE PILED HIGH WITH WHITE STONES GLEAMING CLEARLY IN THE MOONLIGHT.
SO!

THE COMMENTS OF THOSE AROUND ADDED FUEL TO THE JEALOUS ANGER WITHIN HIM.
TRIGO WILL BE OUR LEADER!
NOT BRAG... FOR THOUGH HE IS AN HONEST MAN, HE IS NOT CLEVER.
AND CERTAINLY NOT THAT SLIMY SERPENT KLUD!


KLUD'S MIND WAS NOW MADE UP. HE STOLE TOWARDS TRIGO'S TENT WITH MURDER IN HIS HEART.

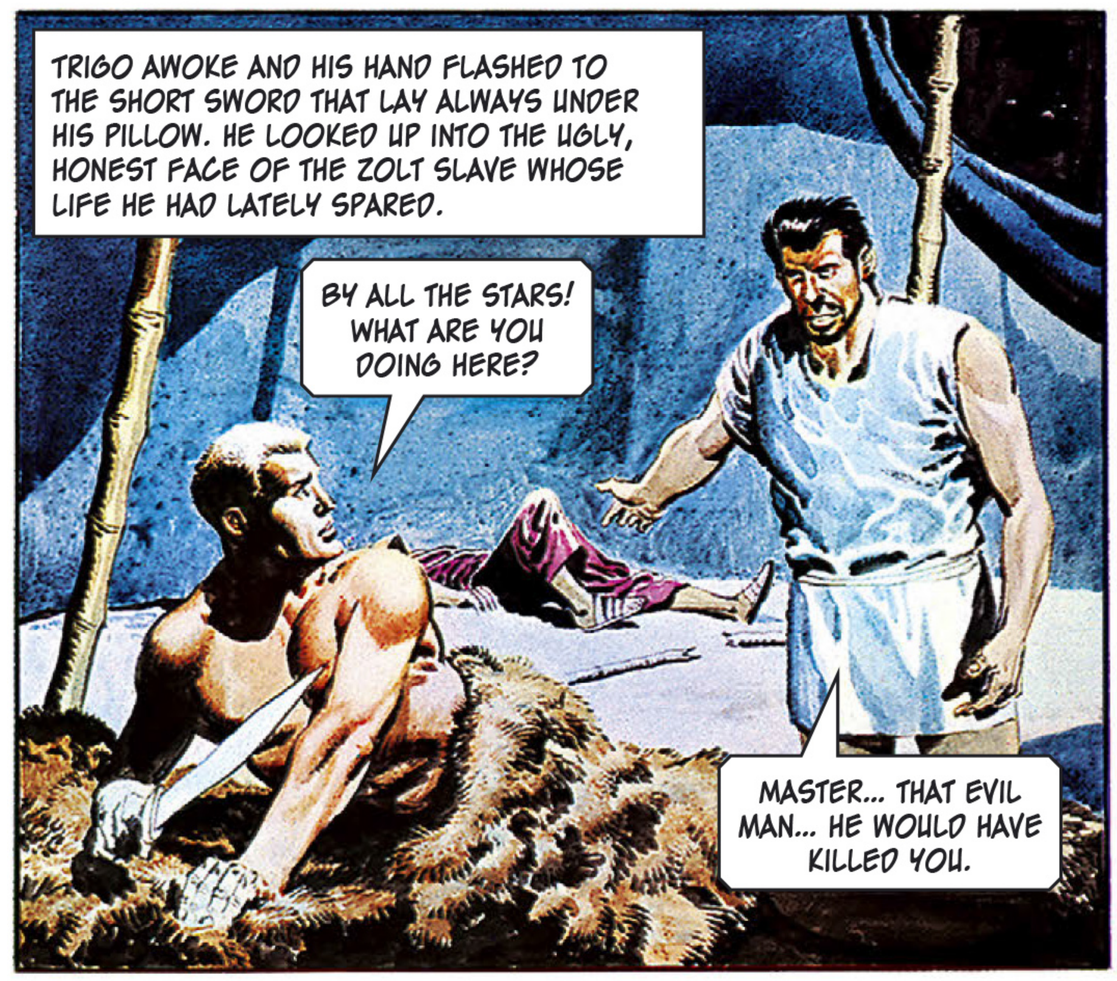

THE SENTRY OUTSIDE THE TENT SLID TO THE GROUND WITHOUT A MURMUR AS KLUD STRUCK HIM DOWN.

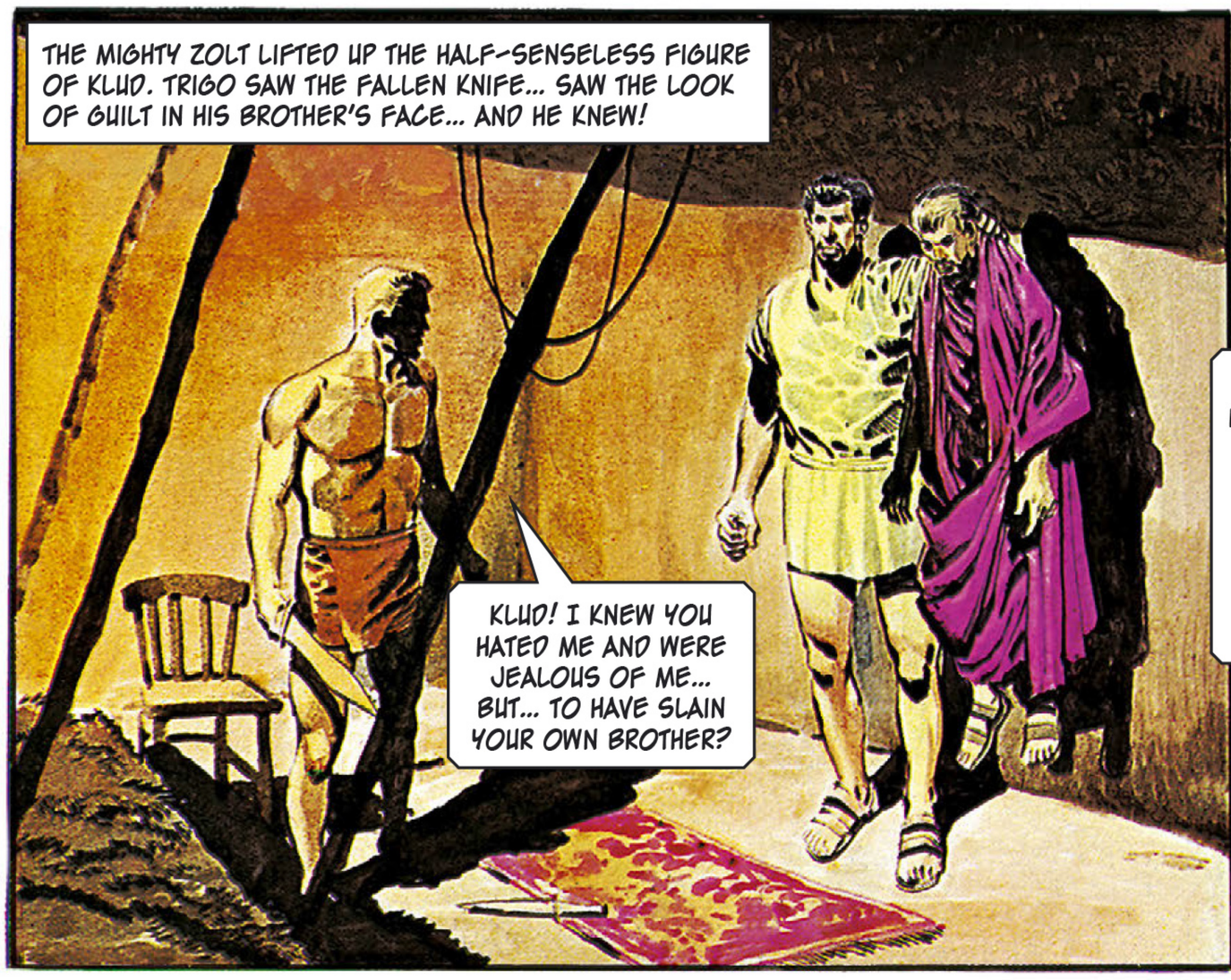

TRIGO LAY ASLEEP, DREAMING OF THE WONDROUS CITY THAT WAS RISING ABOVE THE FIVE HILLS ON THE PLAIN OF VORG.
NOW WE SHALL SEE WHO IS TO BE THE LEADER OF THE VORGS!

ONE THING I KNOW – IT WILL NOT BE YOU, MY FINE BROTHER!

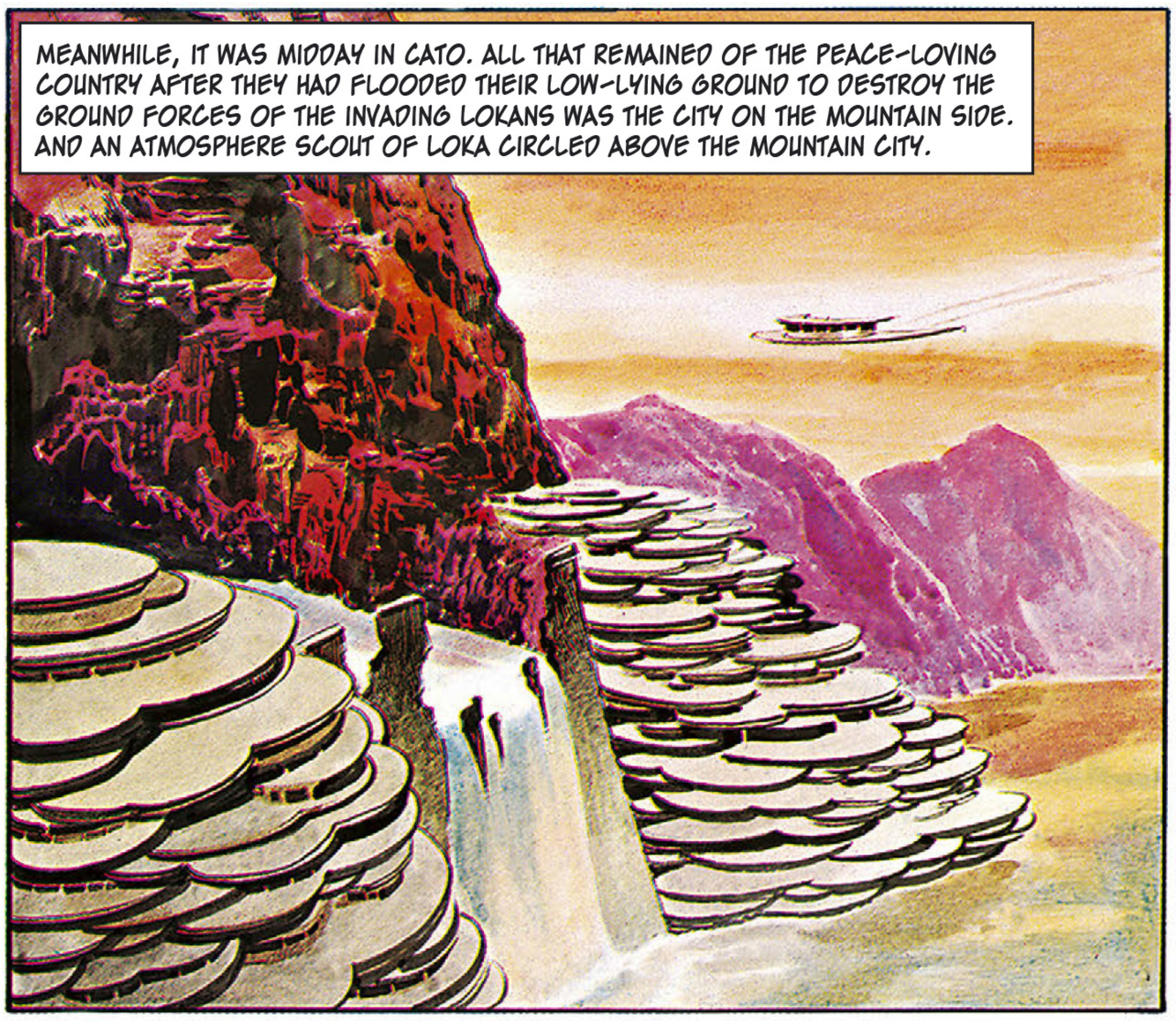
AN INSTANT BEFORE THE BLADE WOULD HAVE CARVED THE LIFE OUT OF TRIGO, A MASSIVE FIGURE LEAPT FROM THE FAR SHADOWS OF THE TENT... A MIGHTY ARM WAS WRAPPED ABOUT KLUD'S NECK...

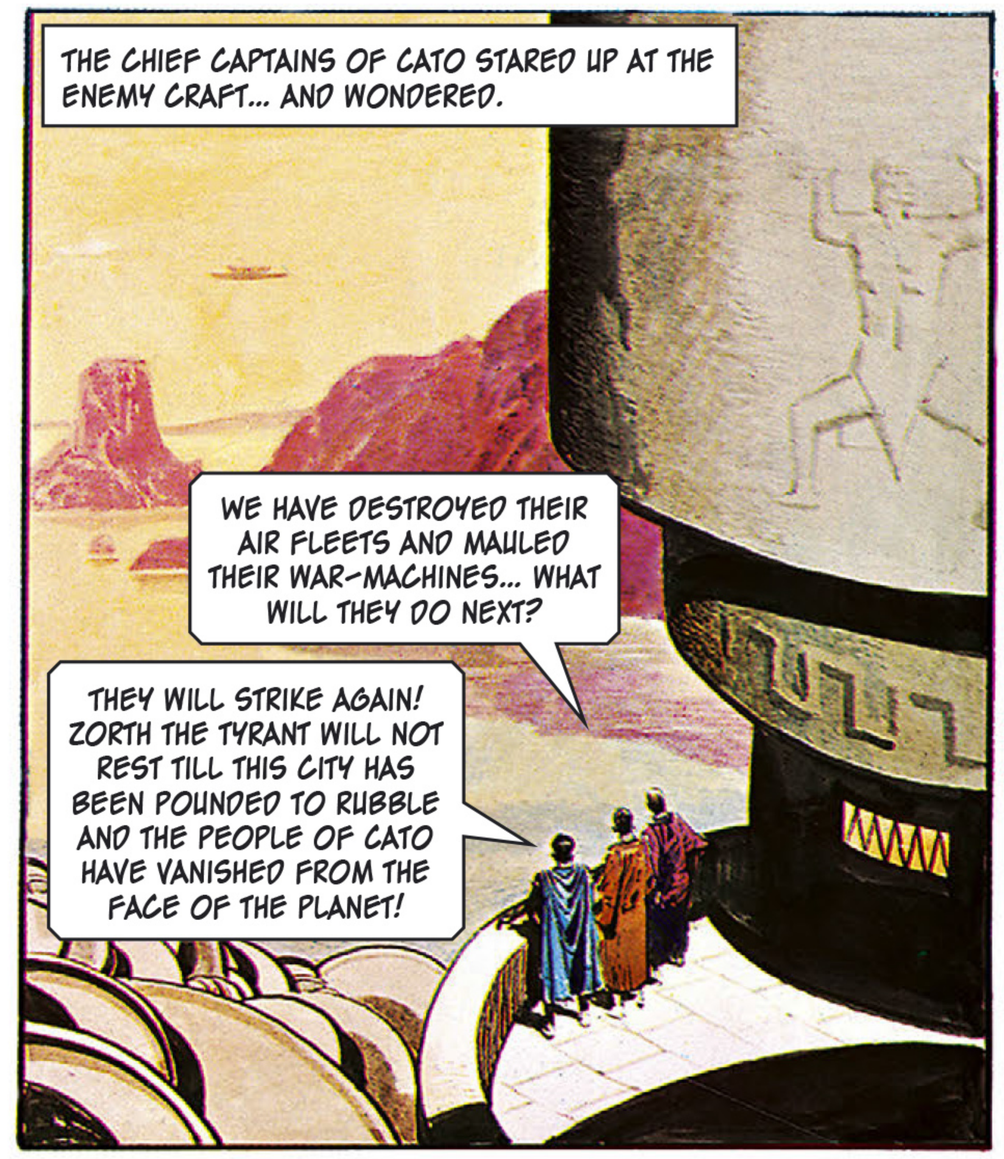
...AND HE WAS HURLED LIKE A BROKEN DOLL TO THE FARTHEST RECESSES OF THE TENT.


TRIGO AWOKE AND HIS HAND FLASHED TO THE SHORT SWORD THAT LAY ALWAYS UNDER HIS PILLOW. HE LOOKED UP INTO THE UGLY, HONEST FACE OF THE ZOLT SLAVE WHOSE LIFE HE HAD LATELY SPARED.
BY ALL THE STARS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
MASTER... THAT EVIL MAN... HE WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU.

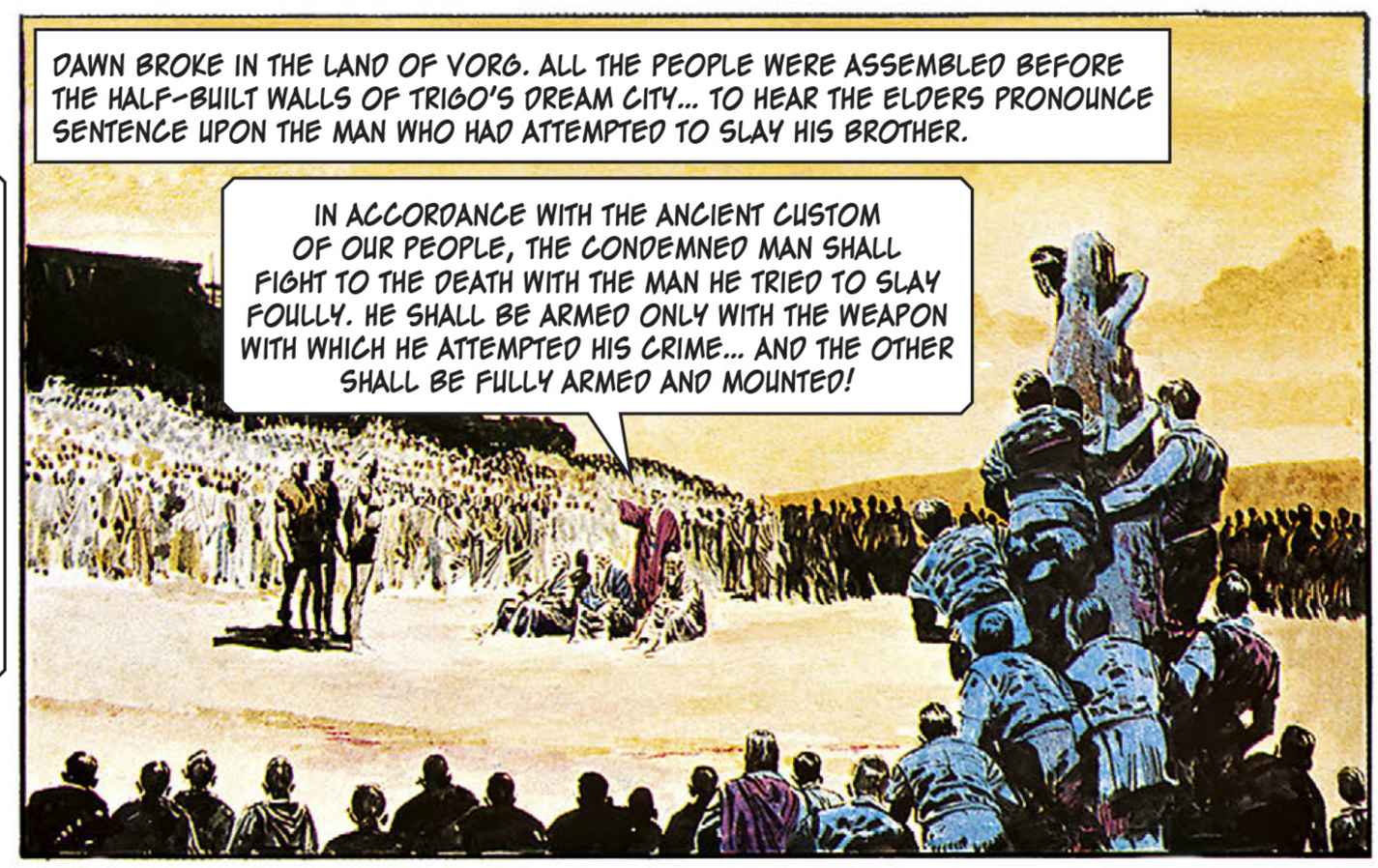

THE MIGHTY ZOLT LIFTED UP THE HALF-SENSELESS FIGURE OF KLUD. TRIGO SAW THE FALLEN KNIFE... SAW THE LOOK OF GUILT IN HIS BROTHER'S FACE... AND HE KNEW!
KLUD! I KNEW YOU HATED ME AND WERE JEALOUS OF ME... BUT... TO HAVE SLAIN YOUR OWN BROTHER?

BITTERNESS AND REGRET MARRED THE FINE FEATURES OF TRIGO OF VORG...
THERE IS NO ESCAPE FOR YOU. THE ANCIENT LAW WILL HAVE TO TAKE ITS COURSE. ON THE MORROW, YOU WILL BE JUDGED AND CONDEMNED BY THE ELDERS OF OUR PEOPLE.


MEANWHILE, IT WAS MIDDAY IN CATO. ALL THAT REMAINED OF THE PEACE-LOVING COUNTRY AFTER THEY HAD FLOODED THEIR LOW-LYING GROUND TO DESTROY THE GROUND FORCES OF THE INVADING LOKANS WAS THE CITY ON THE MOUNTAIN SIDE. AND AN ATMOSPHERE SCOUT OF LOKA CIRCLED ABOVE THE MOUNTAIN CITY.


THE CHIEF CAPTAINS OF CATO STARED UP AT THE ENEMY CRAFT... AND WONDERED.
WE HAVE DESTROYED THEIR AIR FLEETS AND MAULED THEIR WAR-MACHINES... WHAT WILL THEY DO NEXT?
THEY WILL STRIKE AGAIN! ZORTH THE TYRANT WILL NOT REST TILL THIS CITY HAS BEEN POUNDED TO RUBBLE AND THE PEOPLE OF CATO HAVE VANISHED FROM THE FACE OF THE PLANET!

FROM THE ATMOSPHERE SCOUT, ZORTH, THE LORD OF LOKA, GLARED DOWN UPON THE CITY THAT STILL DEFIED HIS MIGHT... AND HE CAME TO A TERRIBLE DECISION...
I SWEAR THAT I WILL NEITHER SLEEP NOR EAT WHILST ONE STONE RESTS UPON THE OTHER IN THE CITY OF CATO... THIS DAY, MY WAR-NAVY WILL EMBARK UPON THE FLOODED PLAIN OF CATO... AND WILL POUR DOWN FIRE AND DESTRUCTION UPON THOSE ACCURSED PEOPLE!


DAWN BROKE IN THE LAND OF VORG. ALL THE PEOPLE WERE ASSEMBLED BEFORE THE HALF-BUILT WALLS OF TRIGO'S DREAM CITY... TO HEAR THE ELDERS PRONOUNCE SENTENCE UPON THE MAN WHO HAD ATTEMPTED TO SLAY HIS BROTHER.
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ANCIENT CUSTOM OF OUR PEOPLE, THE CONDEMNED MAN SHALL FIGHT TO THE DEATH WITH THE MAN HE TRIED TO SLAY FOULLY. HE SHALL BE ARMED ONLY WITH THE WEAPON WITH WHICH HE ATTEMPTED HIS CRIME... AND THE OTHER SHALL BE FULLY ARMED AND MOUNTED!

AS THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON ROSE HIGH IN THE SKY, KLUD WAS LED TO A PIECE OF OPEN GROUND AND LEFT TO DEFEND HIMSELF.
AT AN ORDER FROM THE ELDERS, THE GREAT WAR-HORNS BLARED FORTH...

...AND THAT WAS THE SIGNAL FOR TRIGO TO CHARGE DOWN UPON HIS TREACHEROUS BROTHER.

A DOZEN HEADLONG STRIDES FROM THE CROUCHING FIGURE OF HIS BROTHER, TRIGO REINED IN HIS KREED AND THREW HIS WAR-SPEAR TO THE GROUND SO THAT IT BROKE ASUNDER...

NO! I CANNOT DO IT!

HIS SWORD BELT FOLLOWED...

THOUGH YOU WOULD HAVE SLAIN ME IN MY SLEEP, YOU ARE STILL MY BROTHER... AND I CANNOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE ANCIENT CUSTOM!

THE PEOPLE OF VORG STARED IN WIDE-EYED WONDER UPON THE SCENE...

TRIGO IS STRIPPING OFF HIS WAR GEAR! HE WILL FIGHT KLUD BARE-HANDED!

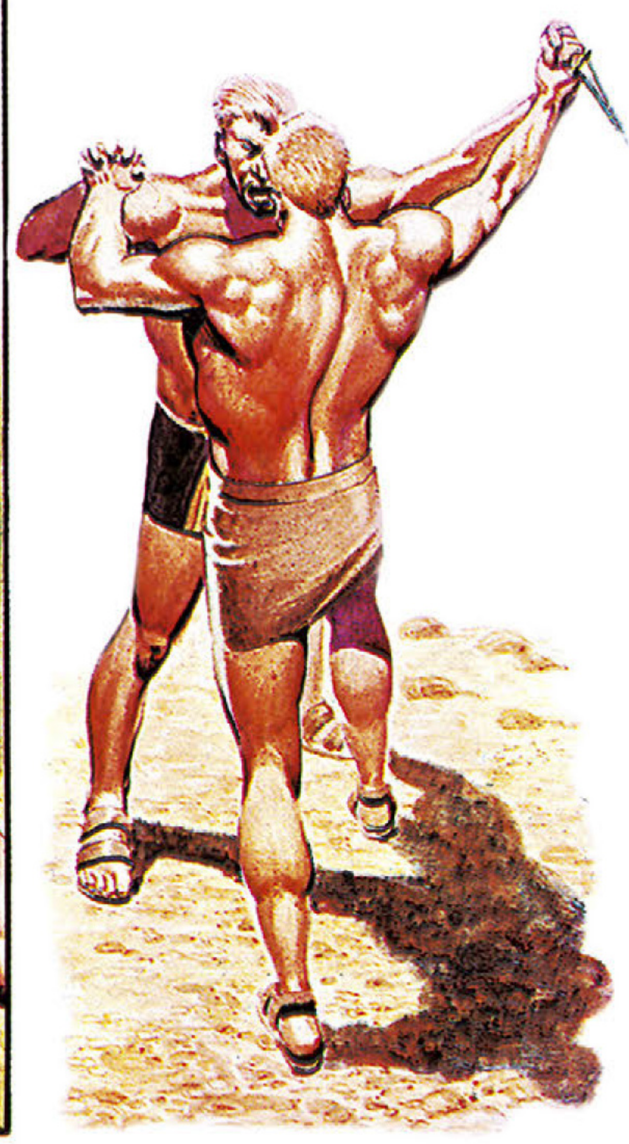
HAVING CAST ASIDE ARMS AND ARMOUR, TRIGO LEAPT HEADLONG FROM HIS MOUNT WITH A CHALLENGING SHOUT...

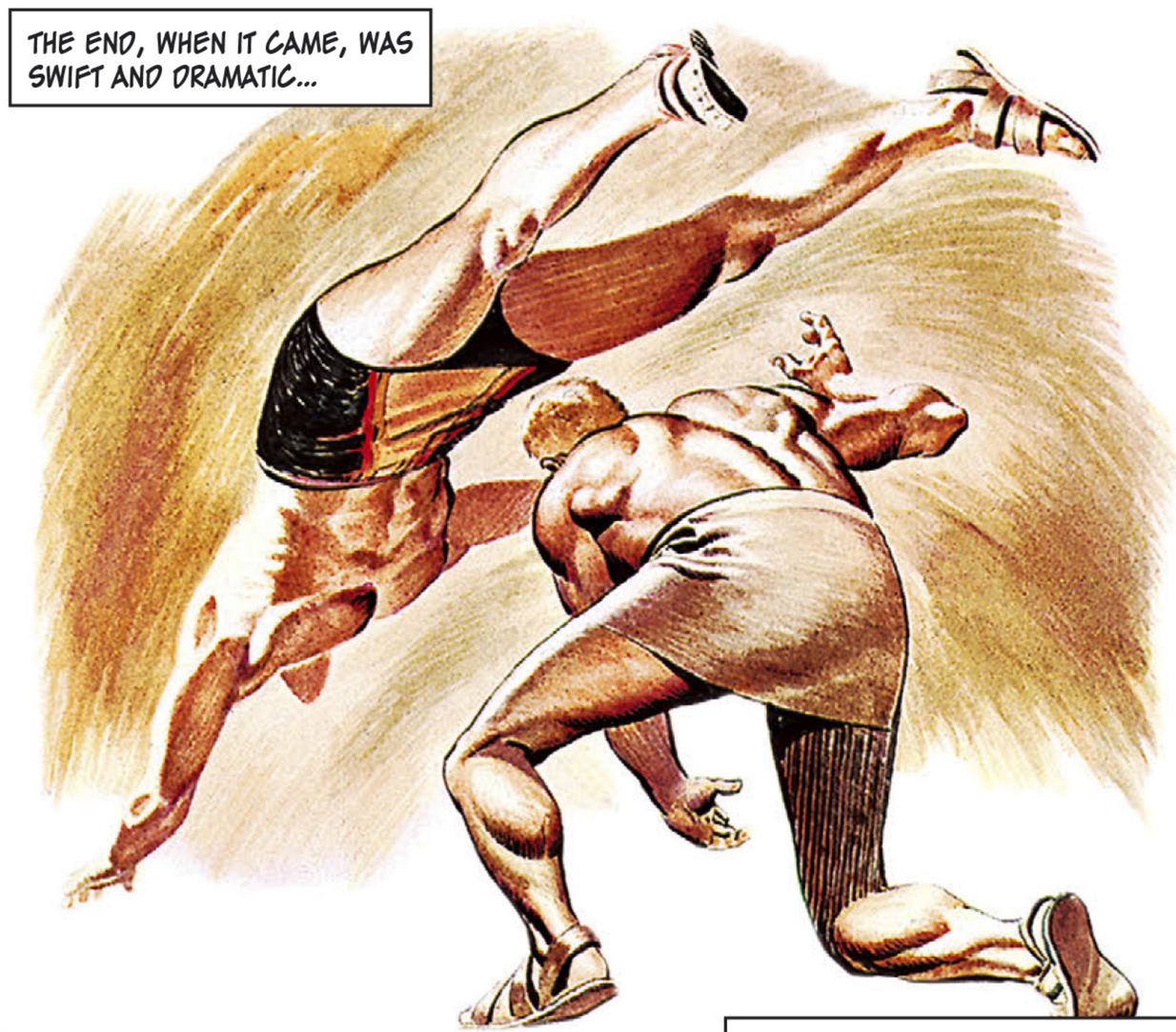
I WILL FIGHT YOU MAN-TO-MAN, BROTHER!

YOU WILL REGRET IT!

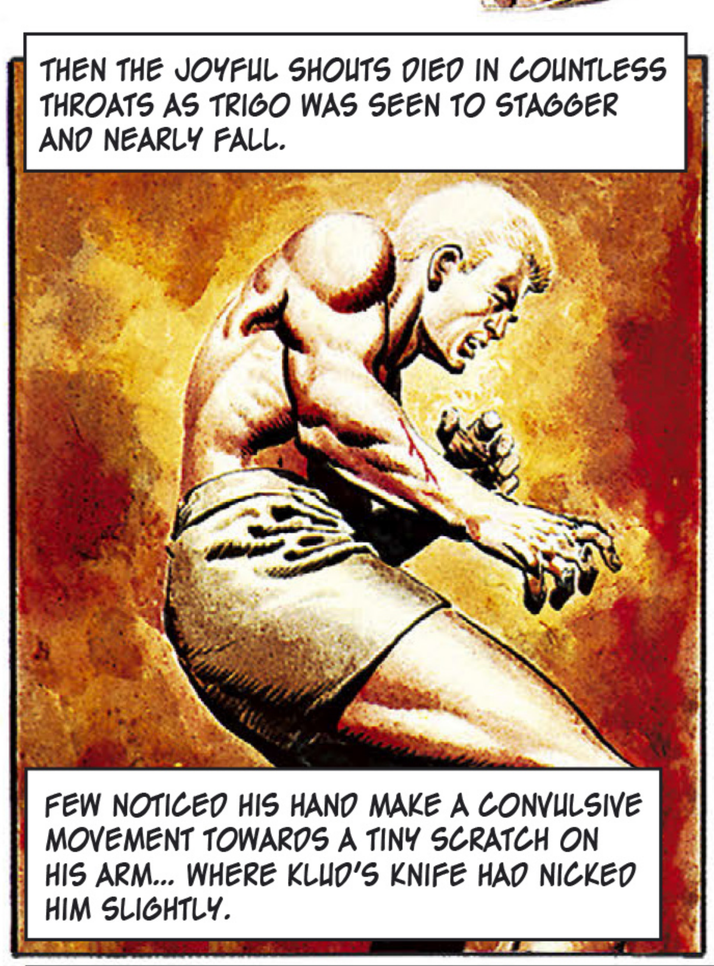
TRIGO SMASHED INTO HIS ADVERSARY WITH BONE-JARRING FORCE AND STRUCK AT THE OTHER'S KNIFE-ARM. THE WEAPON SPUN TO THE GROUND SOME DISTANCE AWAY.

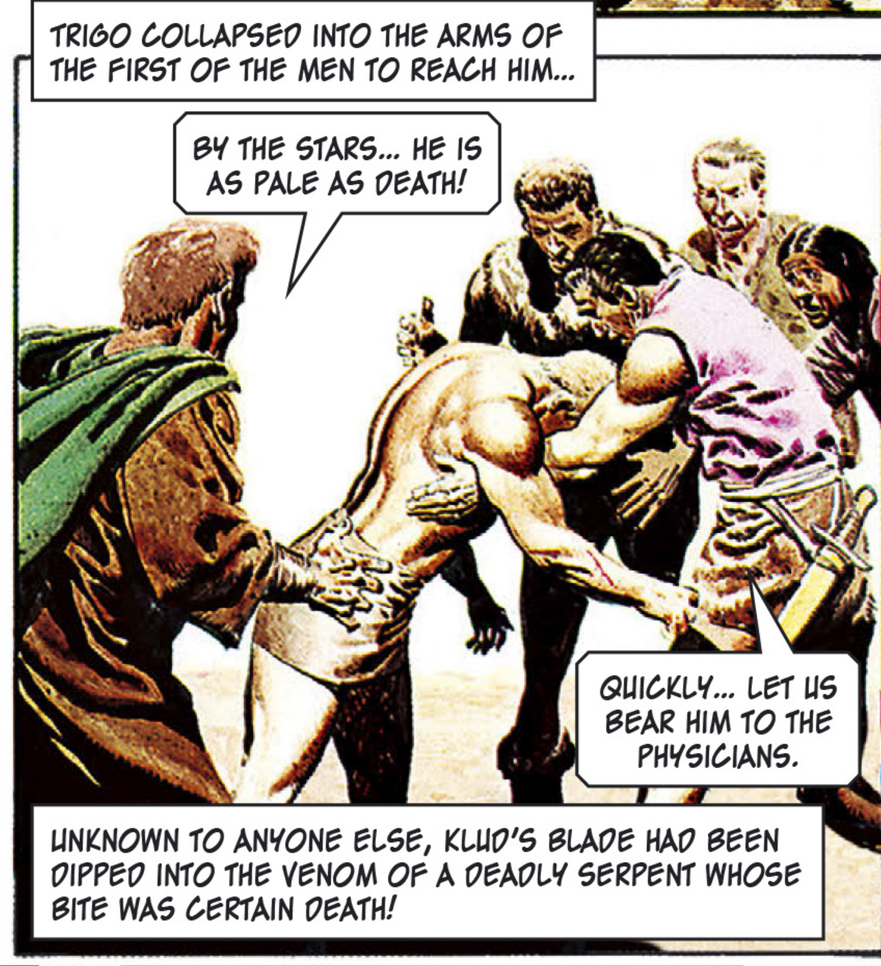
THEIR LIFETIMES OF HUNTING AND WARRING ON THE PLAINS OF VORG HAD HARDENED BOTH BROTHERS AND THEY WERE EVENLY MATCHED. THE DUEL BECAME A BATTLE FOR THE POSSESSION OF THE KNIFE, WITH WHICH KLUD SOUGHT TO MAKE A QUICK END TO THE STRUGGLE...

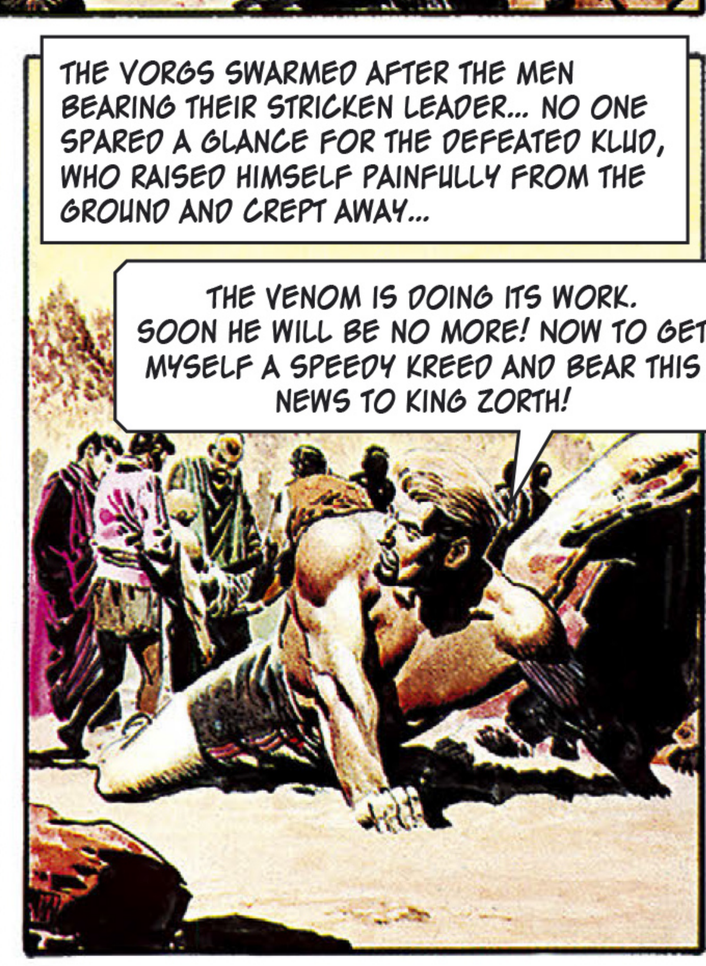


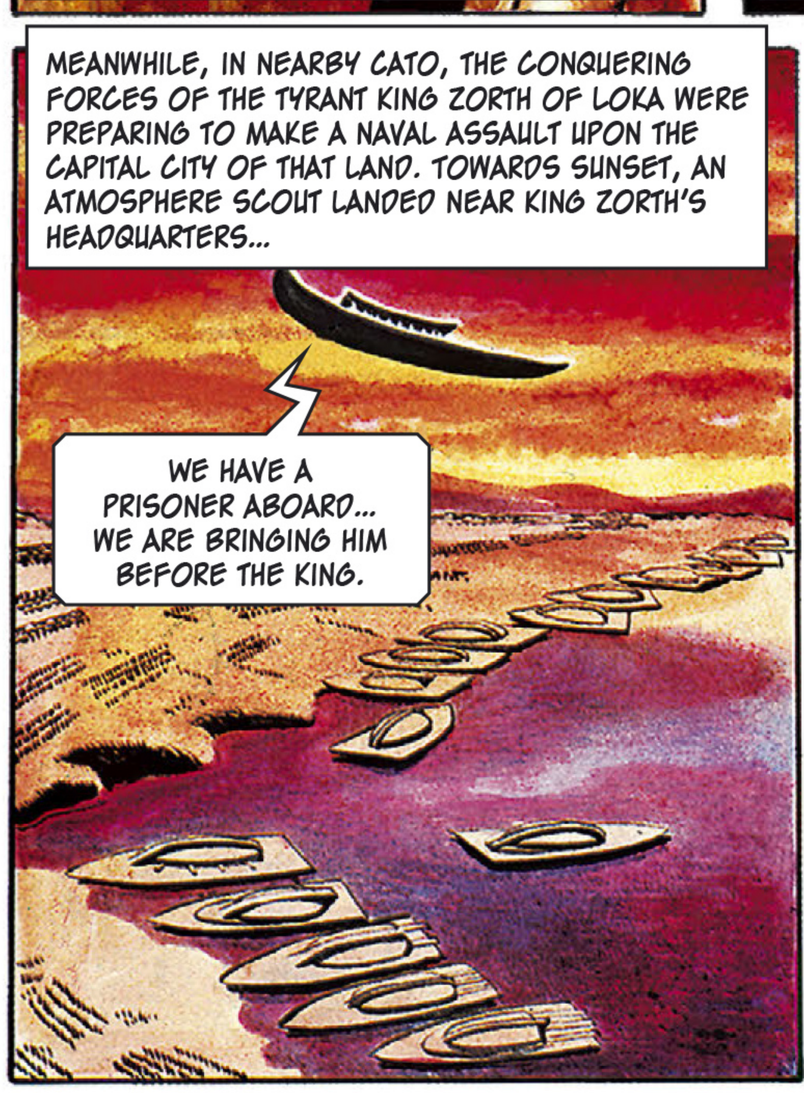

THE END, WHEN IT CAME, WAS SWIFT AND DRAMATIC...

KLUD FELL HEAVILY AND LAY STILL. TRIGO STOOD VICTORIOUS AND RECEIVED THE SALUTATIONS OF HIS PEOPLE.
ALL HAIL TRIGO, LEADER OF THE VORGS!


THEN THE JOYFUL SHOUTS DIED IN COUNTLESS THROATS AS TRIGO WAS SEEN TO STAGGER AND NEARLY FALL.
FEW NOTICED HIS HAND MAKE A CONVULSIVE MOVEMENT TOWARDS A TINY SCRATCH ON HIS ARM... WHERE KLUD'S KNIFE HAD NICKED HIM SLIGHTLY.

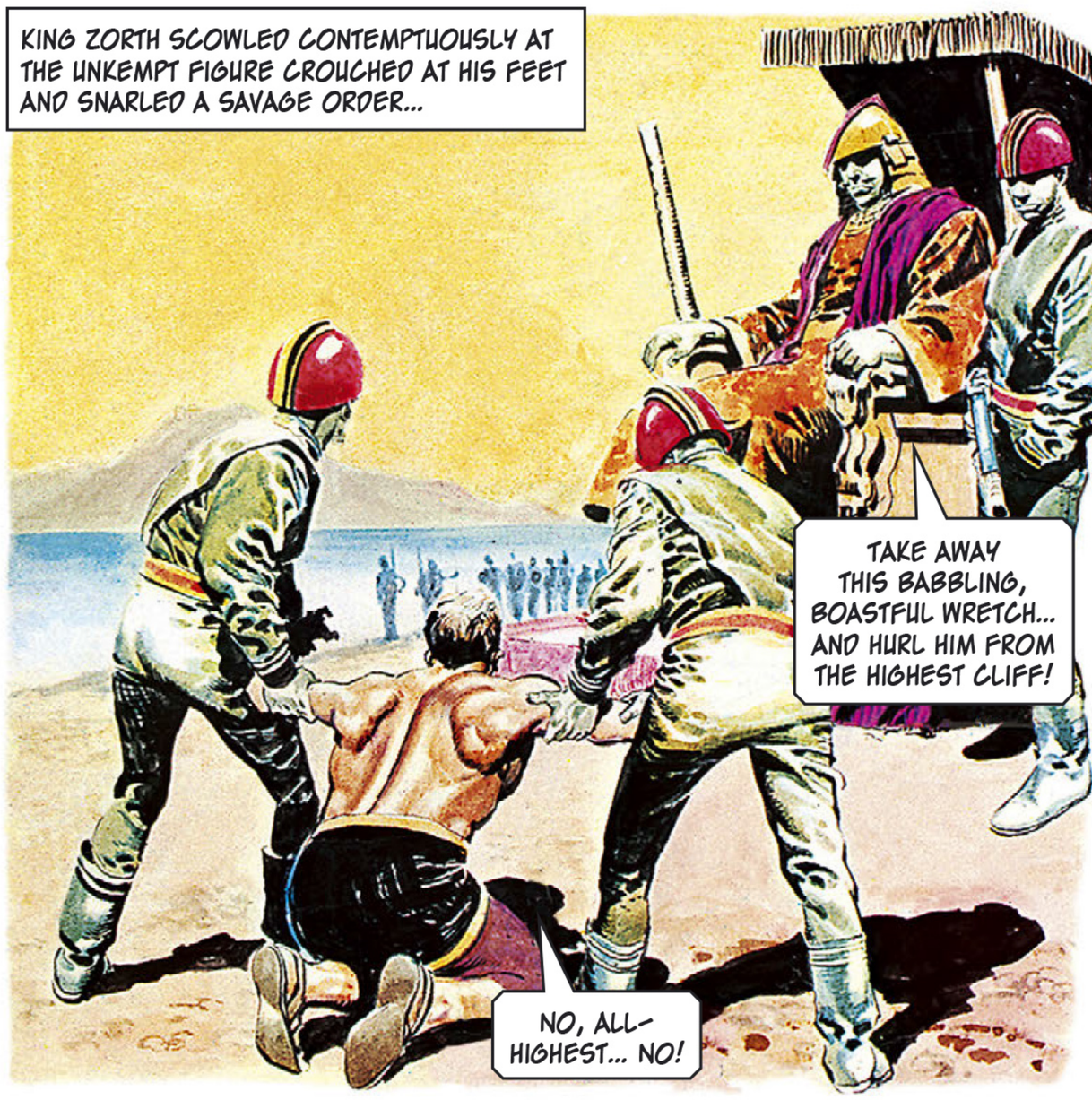

TRIGO COLLAPSED INTO THE ARMS OF THE FIRST OF THE MEN TO REACH HIM...
BY THE STARS... HE IS AS PALE AS DEATH!
QUICKLY... LET US BEAR HIM TO THE PHYSICIANS.
UNKNOWN TO ANYONE ELSE, KLUD'S BLADE HAD BEEN DIPPED INTO THE VENOM OF A DEADLY SERPENT WHOSE BITE WAS CERTAIN DEATH!


THE VORGS SWARMED AFTER THE MEN BEARING THEIR STRICKEN LEADER... NO ONE SPARED A GLANCE FOR THE DEFEATED KLUD, WHO RAISED HIMSELF PAINFULLY FROM THE GROUND AND CREPT AWAY...
THE VENOM IS DOING ITS WORK. SOON HE WILL BE NO MORE! NOW TO GET MYSELF A SPEEDY KREED AND BEAR THIS NEWS TO KING ZORTH!

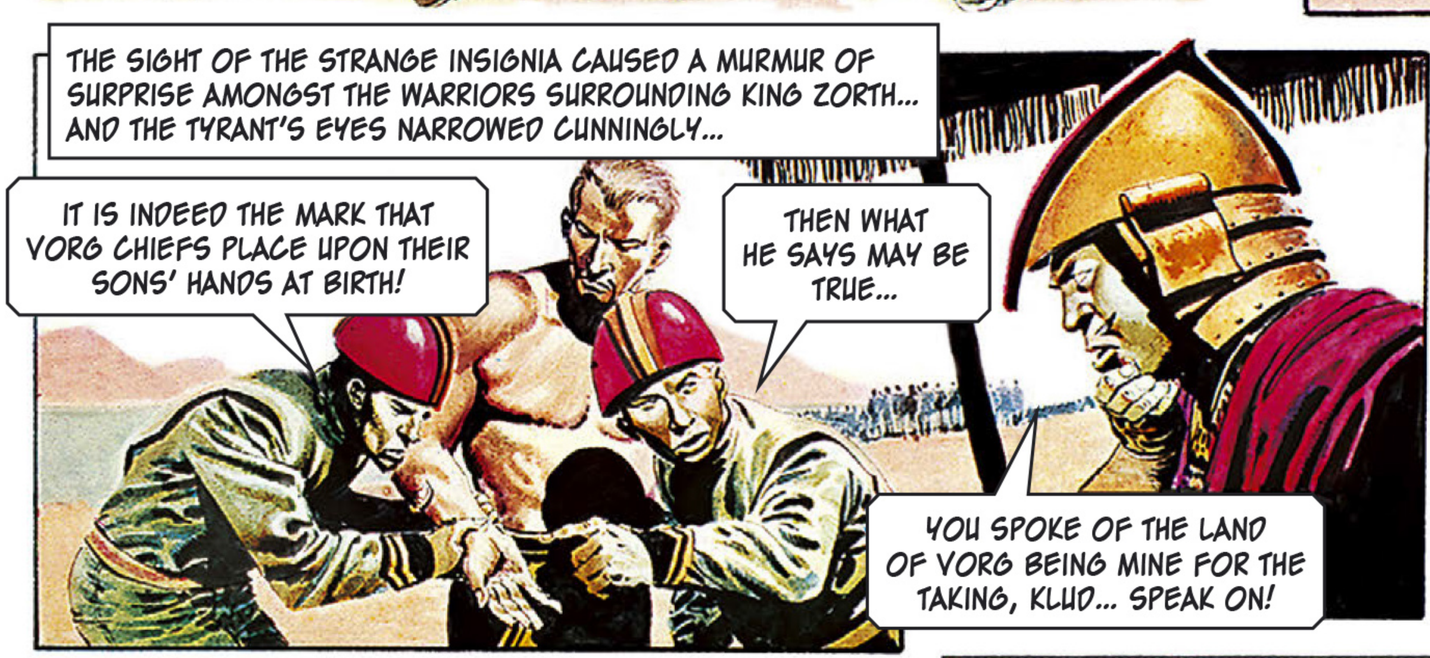

MEANWHILE, IN NEARBY CATO, THE CONQUERING FORCES OF THE TYRANT KING ZORTH OF LOKA WERE PREPARING TO MAKE A NAVAL ASSAULT UPON THE CAPITAL CITY OF THAT LAND. TOWARDS SUNSET, AN ATMOSPHERE SCOUT LANDED NEAR KING ZORTH'S HEADQUARTERS...
WE HAVE A PRISONER ABOARD... WE ARE BRINGING HIM BEFORE THE KING.

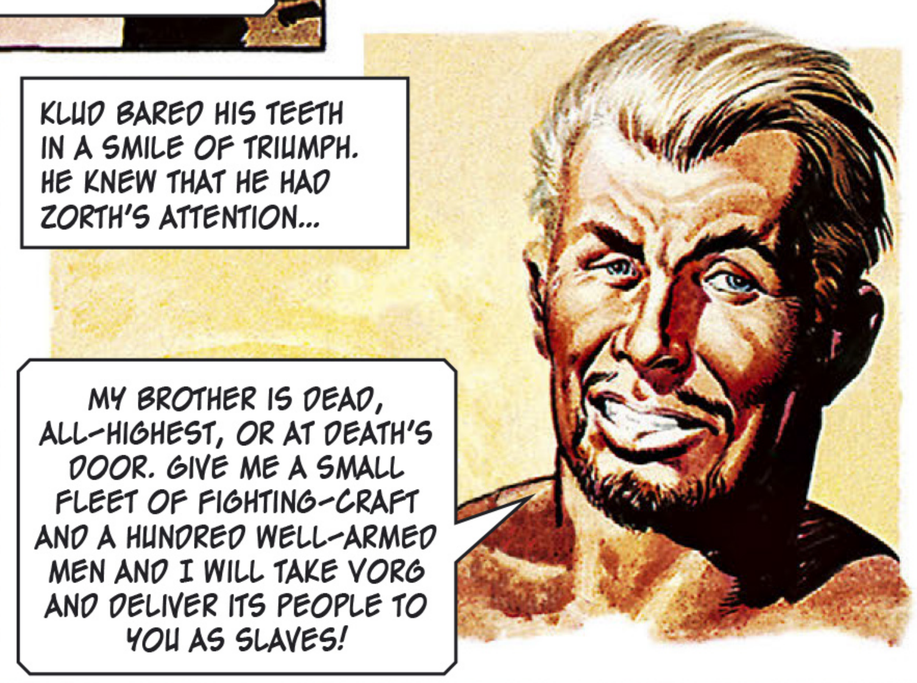
THE CRAFT LANDED AND THE CREWMEN DRAGGED OUT A MAN WHOM THEY THREW AT THE FEET OF THEIR MERCILESS KING.
ALL HIGHEST... WE WERE PATROLLING THE BORDERS OF VORG WHEN WE SAW THIS WRETCH RIDING TOWARDS CATO. WE LANDED AND MADE HIM PRISONER... BUT HE REFUSES TO SPEAK TO ANYONE BUT YOURSELF!

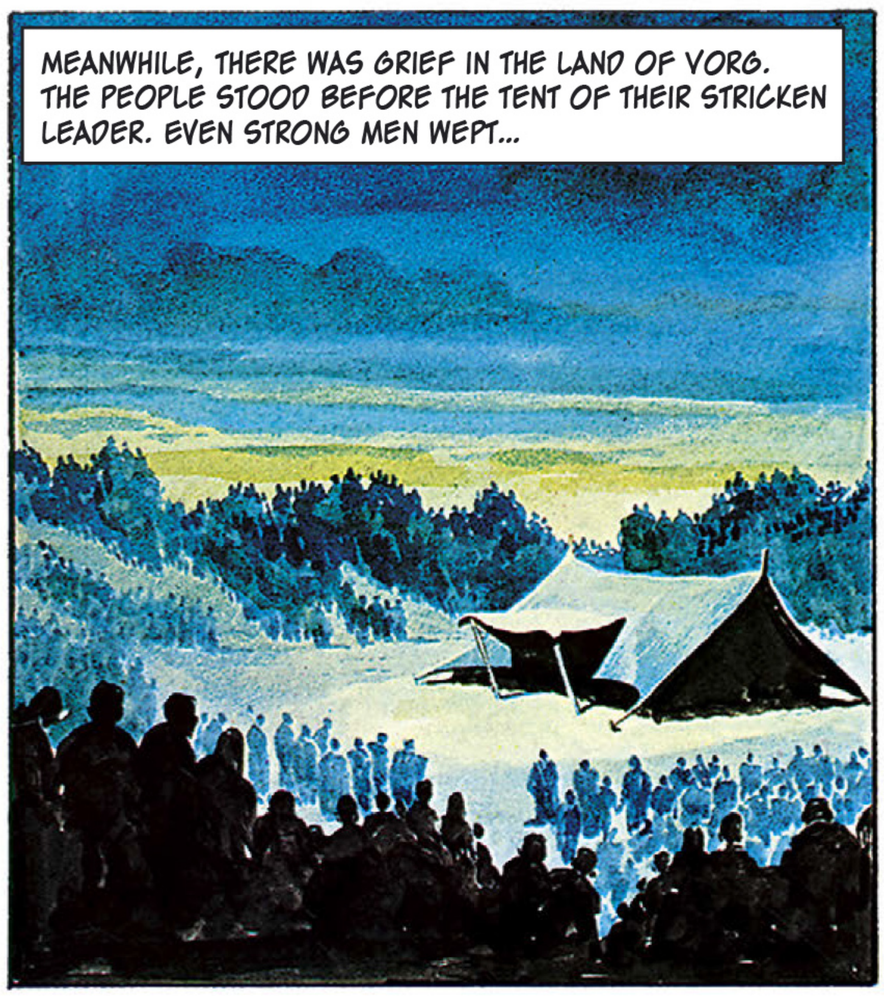
THE PRISONER WAS KLUD. HE RAISED HIS EYES TO MEET THOSE OF KING ZORTH...
WHAT HAVE YOU TO TELL ME, WRETCH?
TRIGO IS DEAD, MIGHTY KING... AND WITH MY HELP, THE LAND OF VORG IS YOURS FOR THE TAKING!


KING ZORTH SCOWLED CONTEMPTUOUSLY AT THE UNKEMPT FIGURE CROUCHED AT HIS FEET AND SNARLED A SAVAGE ORDER...
TAKE AWAY THIS BABBLING, BOASTFUL WRETCH... AND HURL HIM FROM THE HIGHEST CLIFF!
NO, ALL-HIGHEST... NO!

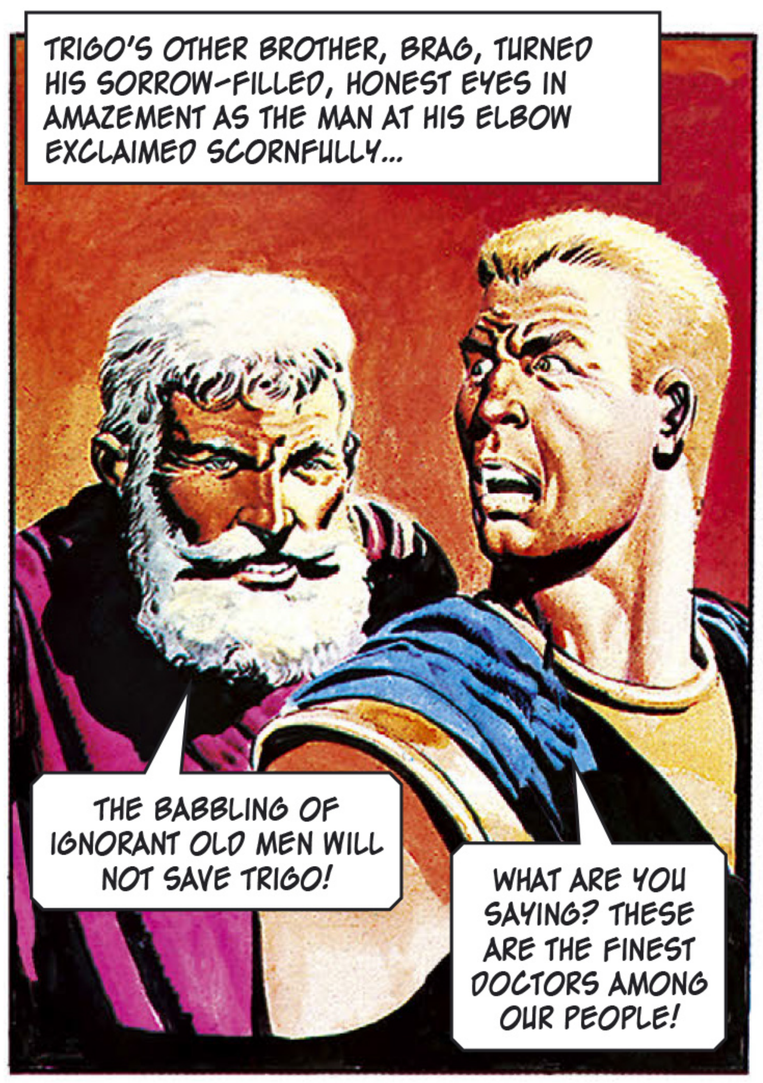
STRUGGLING WILDLY, THE TRAITOROUS KLUD WAS DRAGGED AWAY TO MEET HIS FATE...
I SPEAK THE TRUTH, GREAT KING... I AM KLUD, THE SON OF A LONG LINE OF VORG CHIEFS AND THE BROTHER OF TRIGO HIMSELF. SEE... THE SIGN UPON MY PALM...

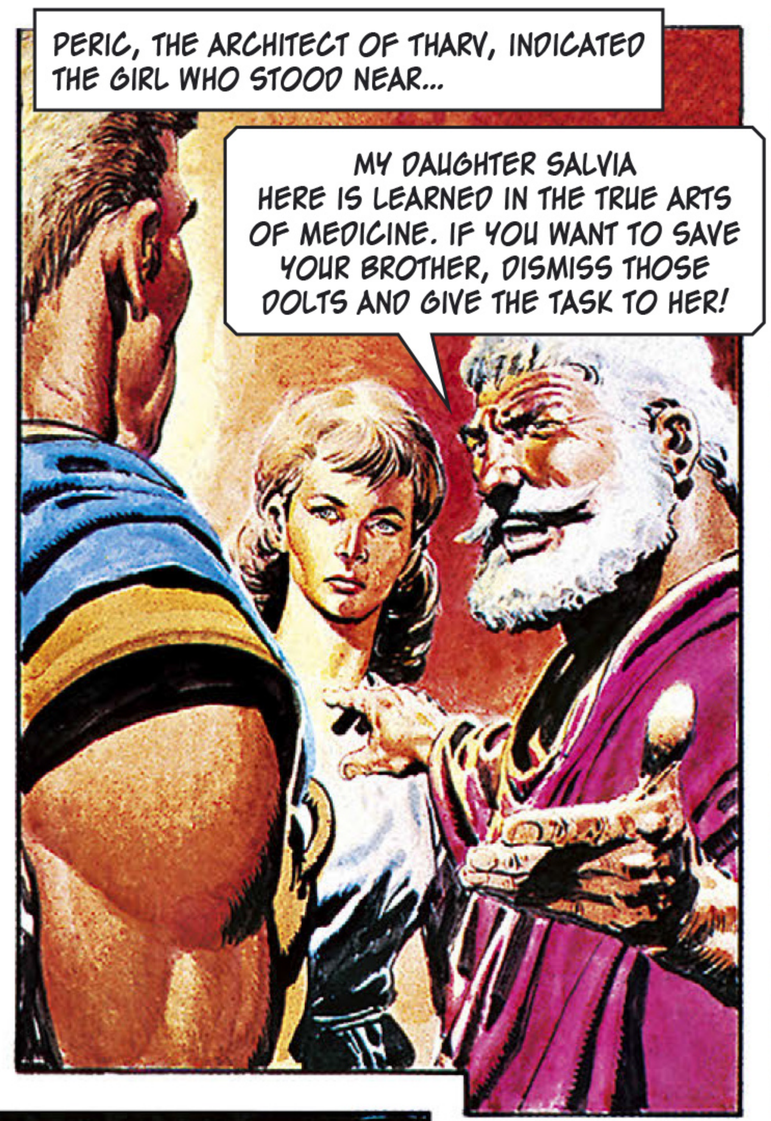

THE SIGHT OF THE STRANGE INSIGNIA CAUSED A MURMUR OF SURPRISE AMONGST THE WARRIORS SURROUNDING KING ZORTH... AND THE TYRANT'S EYES NARROWED CUNNINGLY...
IT IS INDEED THE MARK THAT VORG CHIEFS PLACE UPON THEIR SONS' HANDS AT BIRTH!
THEN WHAT HE SAYS MAY BE TRUE...
YOU SPOKE OF THE LAND OF VORG BEING MINE FOR THE TAKING, KLUD... SPEAK ON!


KLUD BARED HIS TEETH IN A SMILE OF TRIUMPH. HE KNEW THAT HE HAD ZORTH'S ATTENTION...
MY BROTHER IS DEAD, ALL-HIGHEST, OR AT DEATH'S DOOR. GIVE ME A SMALL FLEET OF FIGHTING-CRAFT AND A HUNDRED WELL-ARMED MEN AND I WILL TAKE VORG AND DELIVER ITS PEOPLE TO YOU AS SLAVES!

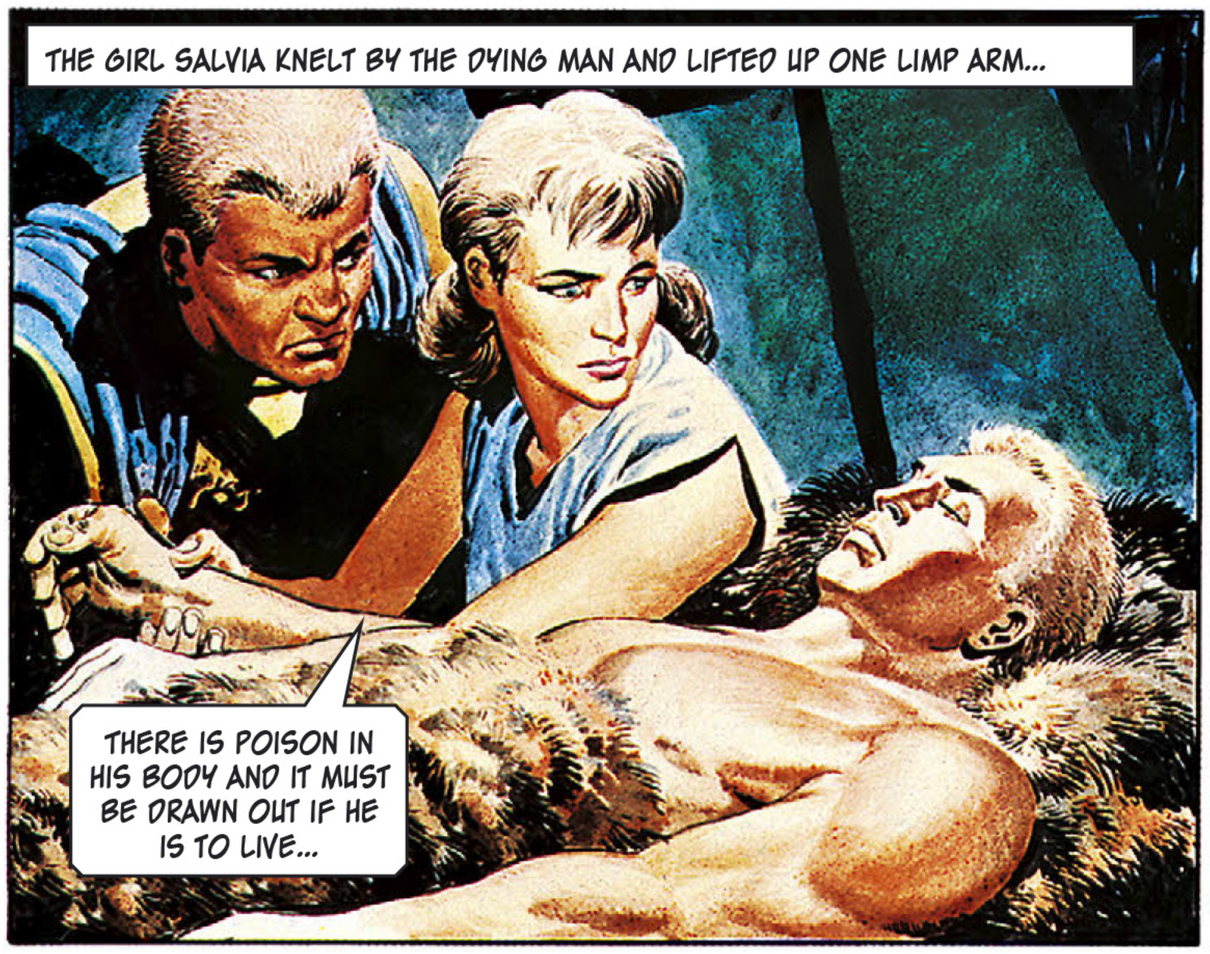

MEANWHILE, THERE WAS GRIEF IN THE LAND OF VORG. THE PEOPLE STOOD BEFORE THE TENT OF THEIR STRICKEN LEADER. EVEN STRONG MEN WEPT...

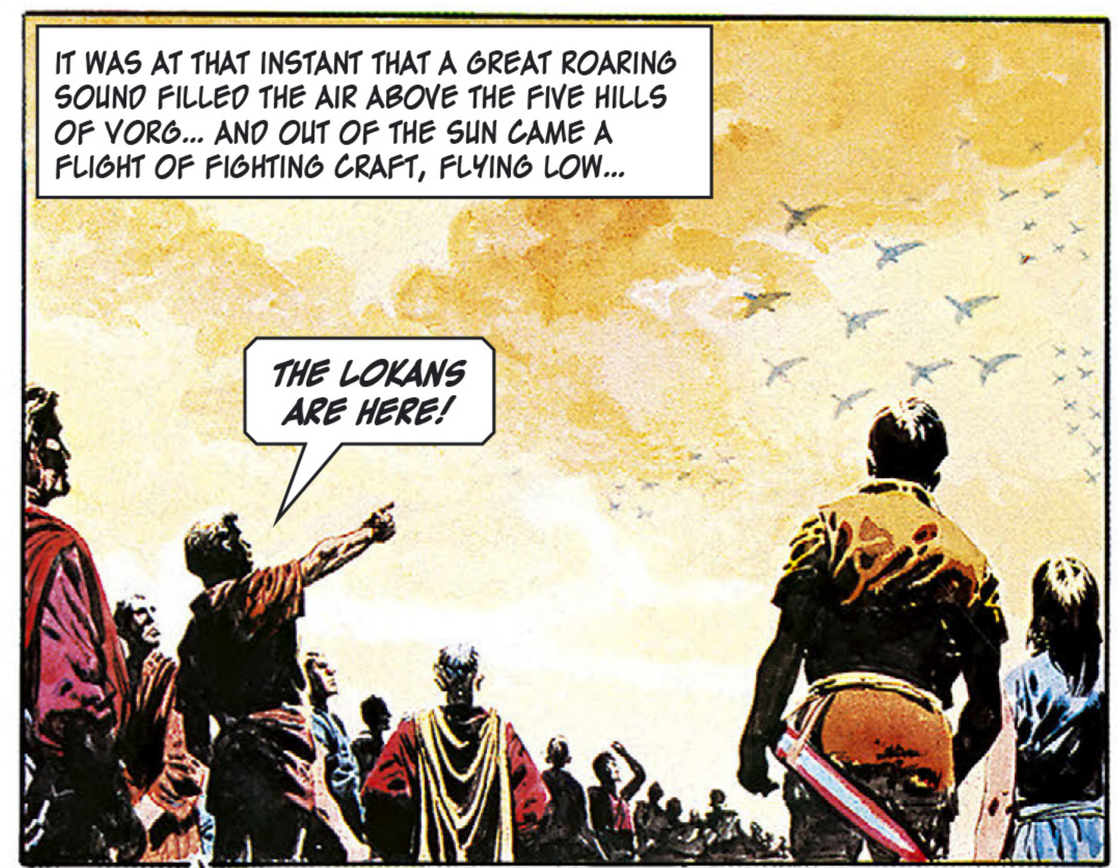
WITHIN THE TENT, THE TRIBAL DOCTORS WERE STRIVING WITH THEIR ANCIENT MAGICAL ARTS TO SAVE THE LIFE THAT WAS EBBING FROM TRIGO'S POWERFUL FRAME WITH EVERY FLAGGING BREATH...
TRIGO MUST LIVE...
I CALL UPON THE SPIRITS OF OUR FOREFATHERS...
BRING HEALTH TO OUR LEADER TRIGO!

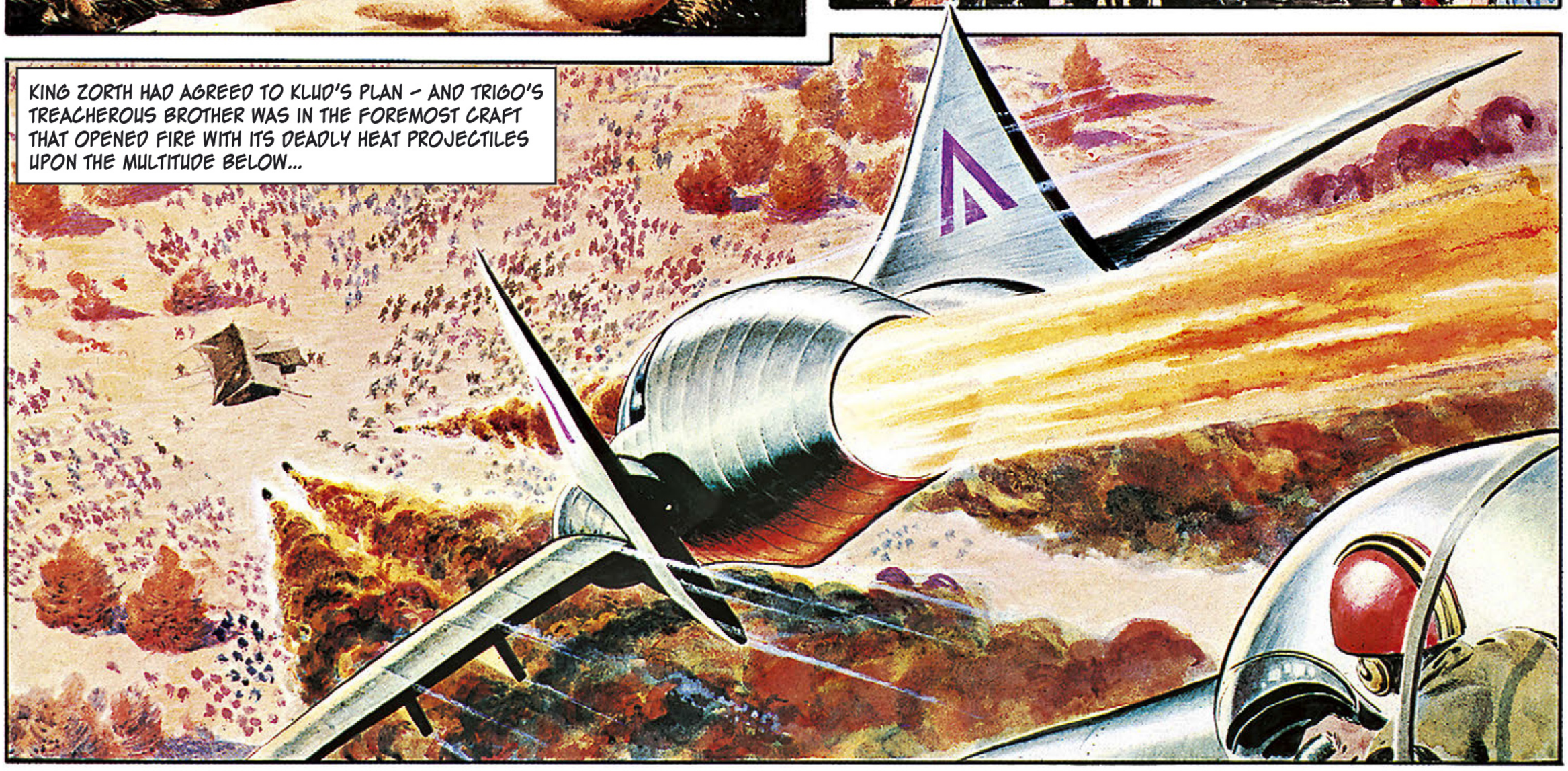

TRIGO'S OTHER BROTHER, BRAG, TURNED HIS SORROW-FILLED, HONEST EYES IN AMAZEMENT AS THE MAN AT HIS ELBOW EXCLAIMED SCORNFULLY...
THE BABBLING OF IGNORANT OLD MEN WILL NOT SAVE TRIGO!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? THESE ARE THE FINEST DOCTORS AMONG OUR PEOPLE!


PERIC, THE ARCHITECT OF THARV, INDICATED THE GIRL WHO STOOD NEAR...
MY DAUGHTER SALVIA HERE IS LEARNED IN THE TRUE ARTS OF MEDICINE. IF YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR BROTHER, DISMISS THOSE DOLTS AND GIVE THE TASK TO HER!

BRAG WAS A SLOW-MOVING, SLOW-THINKING MAN... BUT CONCERN FOR HIS BELOVED BROTHER BROUGHT HIM TO A QUICK DECISION. HE SCATTERED THE DOCTORS AND THEIR EQUIPMENT...
AWAY WITH YOU! PERIC, MY BROTHER'S LIFE IS IN YOUR DAUGHTER'S HANDS!


THE GIRL SALVIA KNELT BY THE DYING MAN AND LIFTED UP ONE LIMP ARM...
THERE IS POISON IN HIS BODY AND IT MUST BE DRAWN OUT IF HE IS TO LIVE...


IT WAS AT THAT INSTANT THAT A GREAT ROARING SOUND FILLED THE AIR ABOVE THE FIVE HILLS OF VORG... AND OUT OF THE SUN CAME A FLIGHT OF FIGHTING CRAFT, FLYING LOW...
THE LOKANS ARE HERE!


KING ZORTH HAD AGREED TO KLUD'S PLAN – AND TRIGO'S TREACHEROUS BROTHER WAS IN THE FOREMOST CRAFT THAT OPENED FIRE WITH ITS DEADLY HEAT PROJECTILES UPON THE MULTITUDE BELOW...

AGAIN AND AGAIN THE LOKAN CRAFT SWEPT LOW OVER THE PLAIN, DISCHARGING THEIR DEADLY HEAT PROJECTILES AMID THE PANIC-STRICKEN, HELPLESS VORGS...

WITH ONLY ONE THOUGHT IN THEIR MINDS – TO ESCAPE – THE VORGS SCATTERED IN EVERY DIRECTION ACROSS THE PLAIN...

FROM THE LEADING CRAFT, THE TREACHEROUS KLUD – NOW WEARING THE INSIGNIA OF A LOKAN OFFICER – LOOKED DOWN UPON THE ROUT BELOW...

THE VORGS WILL OFFER NO RESISTANCE NOW. LET THEM BE ROUNDED UP AS SLAVES!

AT KLUD'S ORDERS, A PARTY OF AIRBORNE WARRIORS PLUMMETED FROM EACH CRAFT...

THEY FELL FROM THE SKY LIKE SWOOPING HAWKS. A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE GROUND, EACH WARRIOR WAS BROUGHT UP SAFELY BY THE ROCKET PACK ON HIS BACK...

MEANWHILE, IN TRIGO'S HALF-WRECKED TENT, THE GIRL SALVIA WAS FIGHTING FOR THE LIFE OF THE LEADER OF THE VORGS...
HE STILL BREATHES...
THERE IS HOPE FOR HIM – IF I CAN DRAW OUT THE POISON.

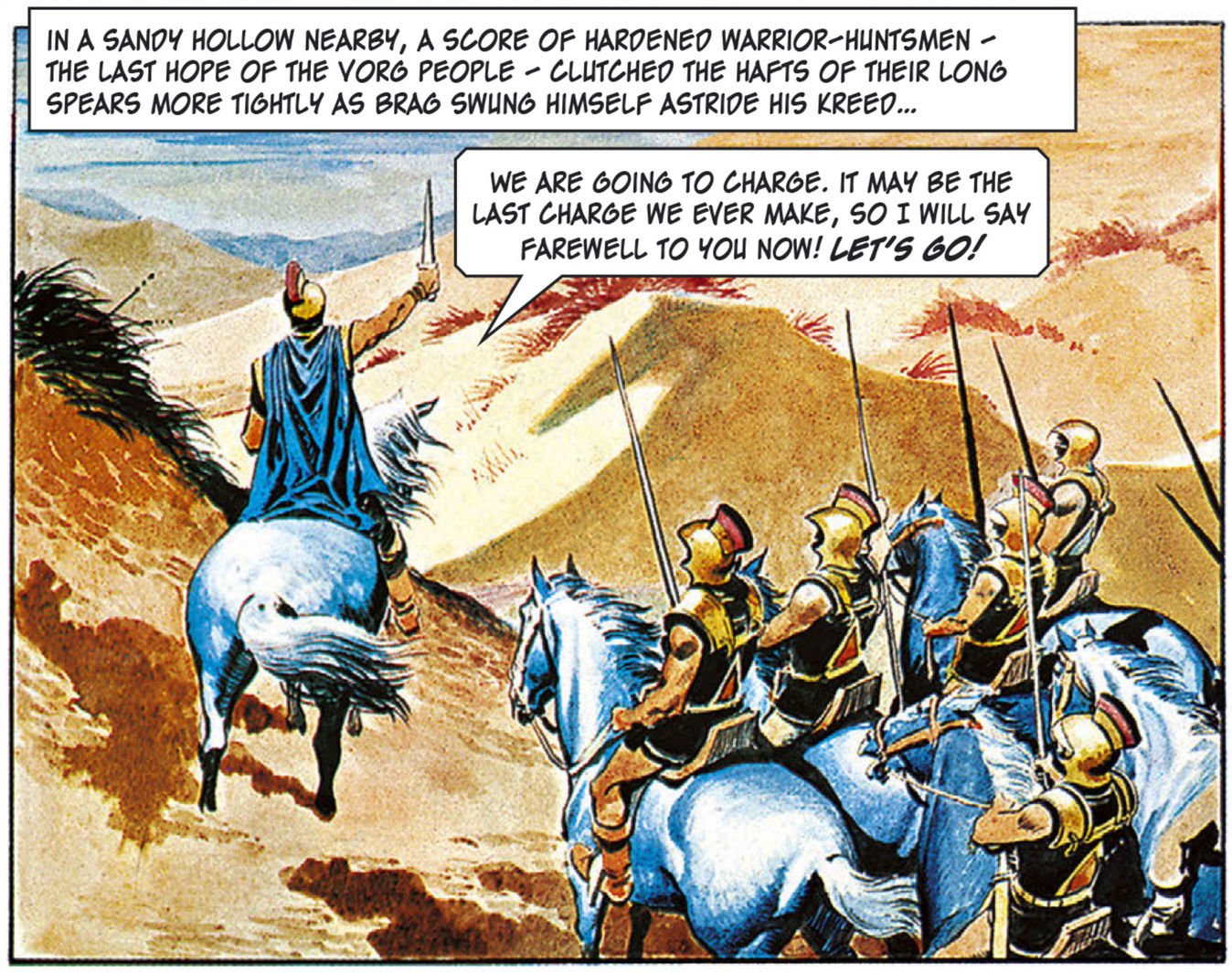
AND THEN...
THEY ARE DROPPING WARRIORS FROM THE SKY, BRAG... ABOUT A HUNDRED OF THEM. AND THEY ARE ROUNDING UP OUR PEOPLE LIKE ANIMALS!
HOW MANY WARRIORS CAN WE MUSTER?

MOST HAVE FLED TO THE PLAINS WITH THEIR FAMILIES. WE CAN MUSTER ABOUT TWENTY, PERHAPS A FEW MORE – FELLOWS LIKE ME, WHO HAVE NO LOVED ONES TO WORRY ABOUT.
THEN WE WILL FIGHT!

BRAG TOOK HIS SAD FAREWELL OF THE BROTHER HE MIGHT NEVER SEE AGAIN...
GOODBYE, MY LEADER. WE MAY NEVER MEET AGAIN... I GO TO CONQUER – OR TO DIE!
HURRY, BRAG! THERE ARE LOKANS TO BE SLAIN!

SOME TIME LATER, BRAG WAS CROUCHING BEHIND A ROCKY OUTCROP AND LOOKING ACROSS THE PLAIN...
THIS IS THEIR STRONG POINT... THAT HEAT PROJECTILE GUN.

BRAG WAS NOT A GREAT LEADER – BUT HIS ANIMAL COURAGE TOLD HIM WHAT HAD TO BE DONE...
WE WILL TAKE THE GUN IN ONE SWEEPING CHARGE!
IT CANNOT BE DONE... BUT, BY THE STARS, LET US DO IT!


IN A SANDY HOLLOW NEARBY, A SCORE OF HARDENED WARRIOR-HUNTSMEN – THE LAST HOPE OF THE VORG PEOPLE – CLUTCHED THE HAFTS OF THEIR LONG SPEARS MORE TIGHTLY AS BRAG SWUNG HIMSELF ASTRIDE HIS KREED...
WE ARE GOING TO CHARGE. IT MAY BE THE LAST CHARGE WE EVER MAKE, SO I WILL SAY FAREWELL TO YOU NOW! LET'S GO!

AND THEN, ONE OF THE GUN CREW TURNED AT THE SOUND OF APPROACHING HOOF-BEATS...

OVER THERE – A PACK OF THE VORG RABBLE IS RESISTING CAPTURE. PREPARE TO OPEN FIRE AND ANNIHILATE THEM!

LOOK! BEHIND US!

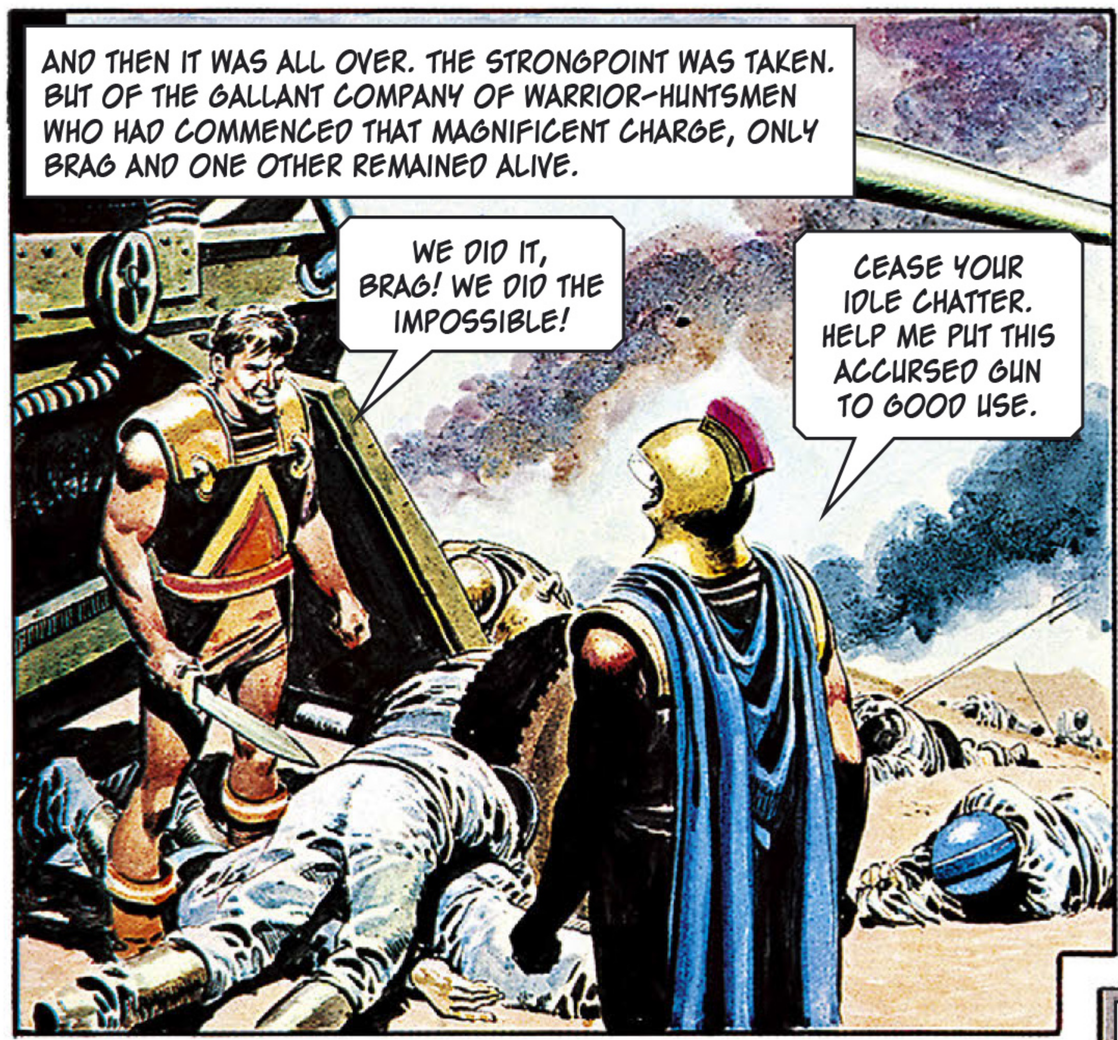
THEY CAME AT THE FULL GALLOP WITH SPEAR POINTS GLEAMING IN THE SUN AND THE WAR-CRY OF THE VORGS ON THEIR LIPS... A HANDFUL OF WARRIOR HUNTSMEN LED BY BRAG... CHARGING STRAIGHT FOR THE GUN!

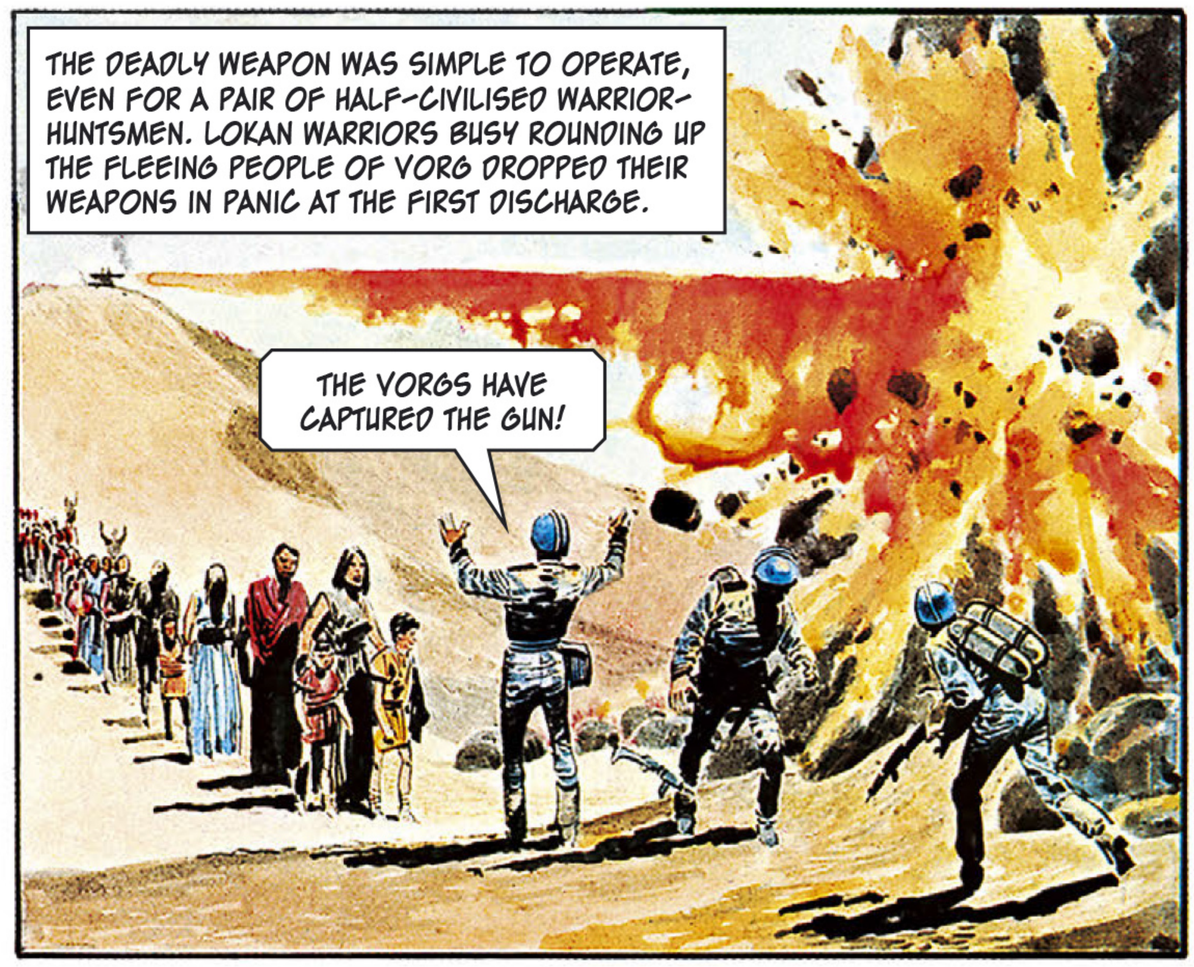
FOR VORG! FOR VORG!

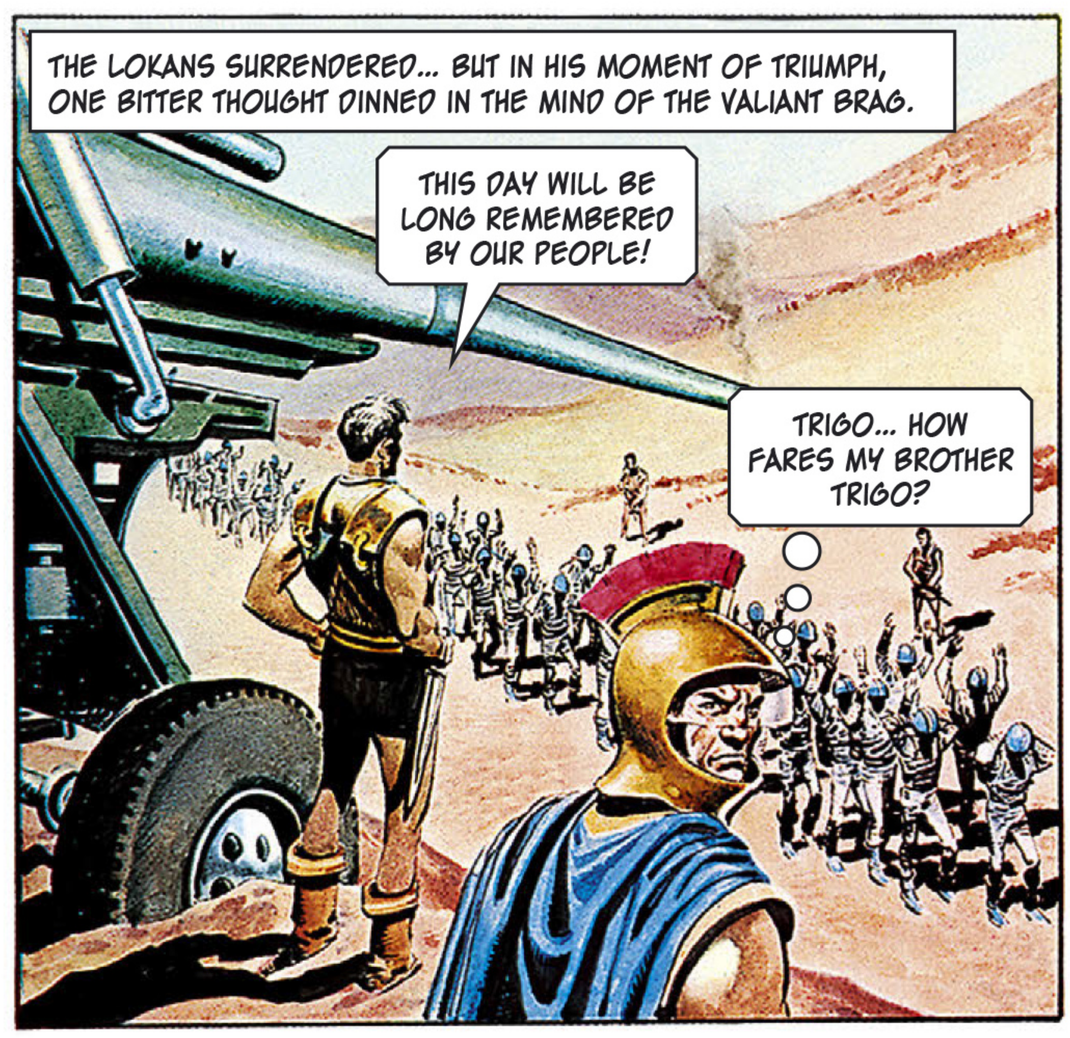
SWIFTLY, THE DEADLY GUNPOINT SWEPT ROUND... STABBED ITS LURID FLAME...

HALF OF BRAG'S TINY FORCE WAS WIPED OUT BY THE FIRST SEARING BLAST OF HEAT. BUT THE REST CAME ON, THUNDERING UP THE SLOPE.

BRAG REACHED THE HILL-CREST AND HIS GREAT SWORD SLICED DOWNWARDS.


AND THEN IT WAS ALL OVER. THE STRONGPOINT WAS TAKEN. BUT OF THE GALLANT COMPANY OF WARRIOR-HUNTSMEN WHO HAD COMMENCED THAT MAGNIFICENT CHARGE, ONLY BRAG AND ONE OTHER REMAINED ALIVE.
WE DID IT, BRAG! WE DID THE IMPOSSIBLE!
CEASE YOUR IDLE CHATTER. HELP ME PUT THIS ACCURSED GUN TO GOOD USE.

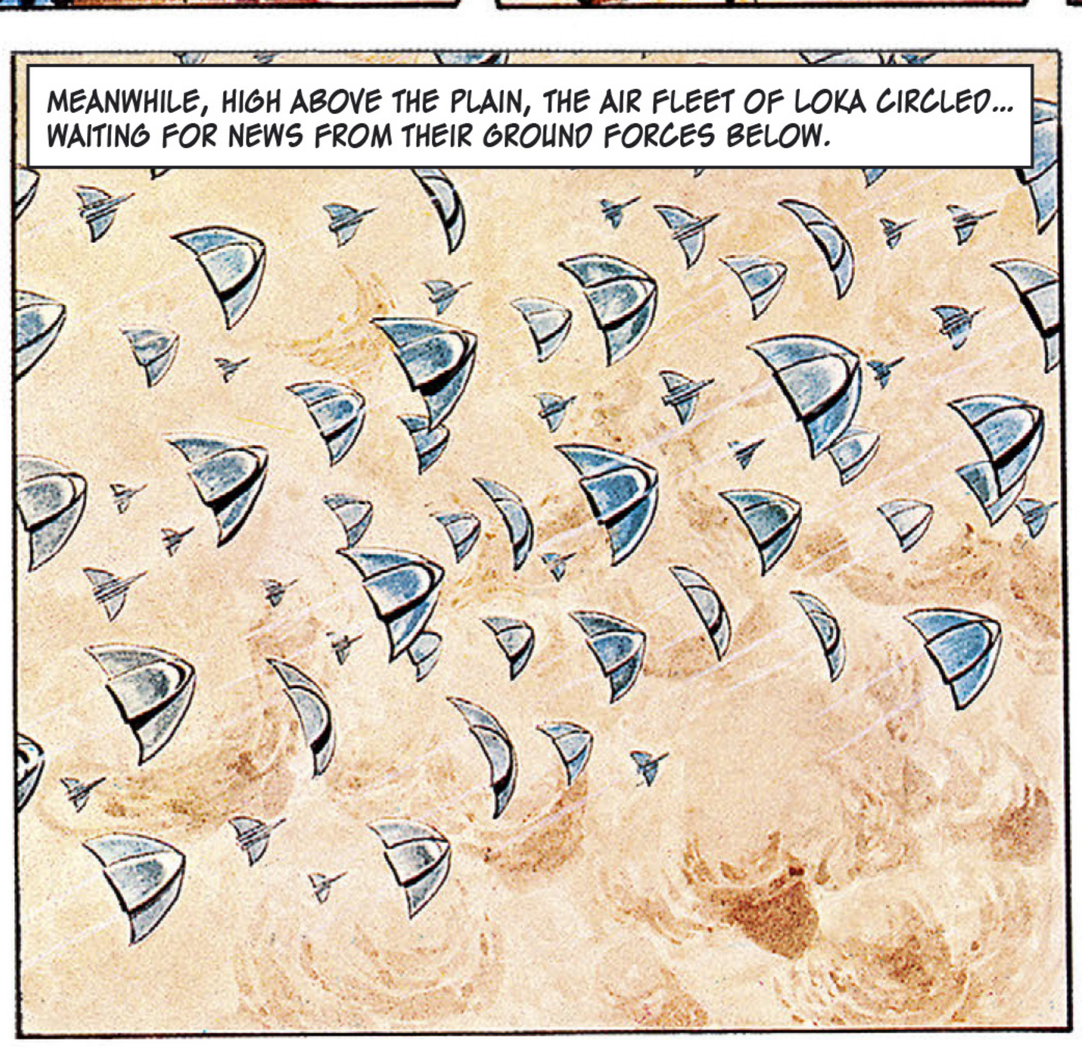

THE DEADLY WEAPON WAS SIMPLE TO OPERATE, EVEN FOR A PAIR OF HALF-CIVILISED WARRIOR-HUNTSMEN. LOKAN WARRIORS BUSY ROUNDING UP THE FLEEING PEOPLE OF VORG DROPPED THEIR WEAPONS IN PANIC AT THE FIRST DISCHARGE.
THE VORGS HAVE CAPTURED THE GUN!


THE LOKANS SURRENDERED... BUT IN HIS MOMENT OF TRIUMPH, ONE BITTER THOUGHT DINNED IN THE MIND OF THE VALIANT BRAG.
THIS DAY WILL BE LONG REMEMBERED BY OUR PEOPLE!
TRIGO... HOW FARES MY BROTHER TRIGO?

HE RAN SWIFTLY TO TRIGO'S TENT. THE GIRL SALVIA MET HIM AT THE ENTRANCE AND BRAG'S STOUT HEART LURCHED TO SEE THE EXPRESSION IN HER EYES.
MY BROTHER... IS HE...?
WITH ALL MY MEDICAL SKILL, I CAN DO NO MORE. YOUR BROTHER'S LIFE IS IN THE HAND OF FATE NOW...

IT SEEMED TO BRAG - AS HE LOOKED DOWN AT TRIGO'S ASHEN FACE - THAT THE LEADER OF THE VORGS WAS ALREADY LIFELESS...
I HAVE DRAWN OUT THE POISON BUT HIS GREAT STRENGTH HAS BEEN SAPPED. HE IS FADING AWAY LIKE A FLICKERING LANTERN-FLAME...

THE MIGHTY BRAG FELL ON HIS KNEES AND BURIED HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS...
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE PEOPLE OF VORG? I AM A SIMPLE WARRIOR, NOTHING MORE. I CANNOT LEAD OUR PEOPLE IN THESE TERRIBLE TIMES!

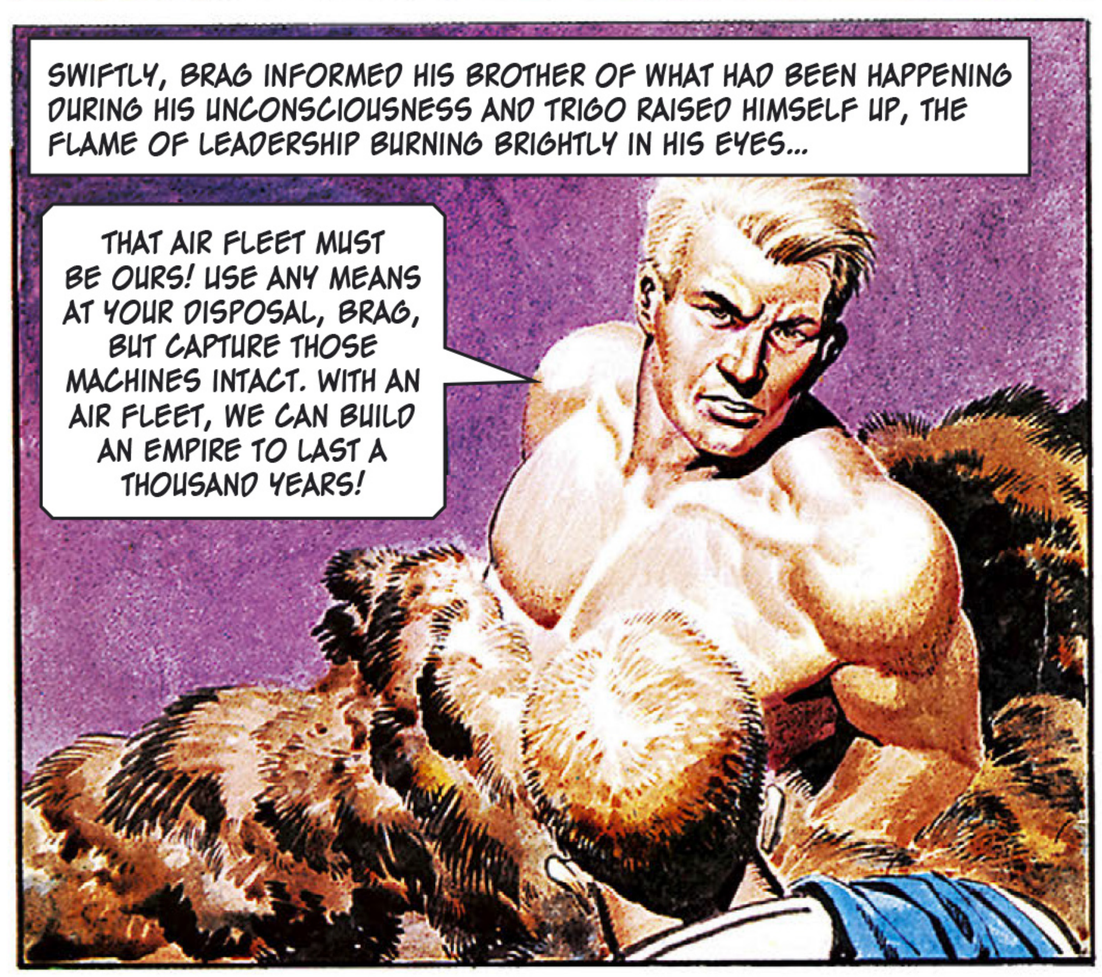

MEANWHILE, HIGH ABOVE THE PLAIN, THE AIR FLEET OF LOKA CIRCLED... WAITING FOR NEWS FROM THEIR GROUND FORCES BELOW.

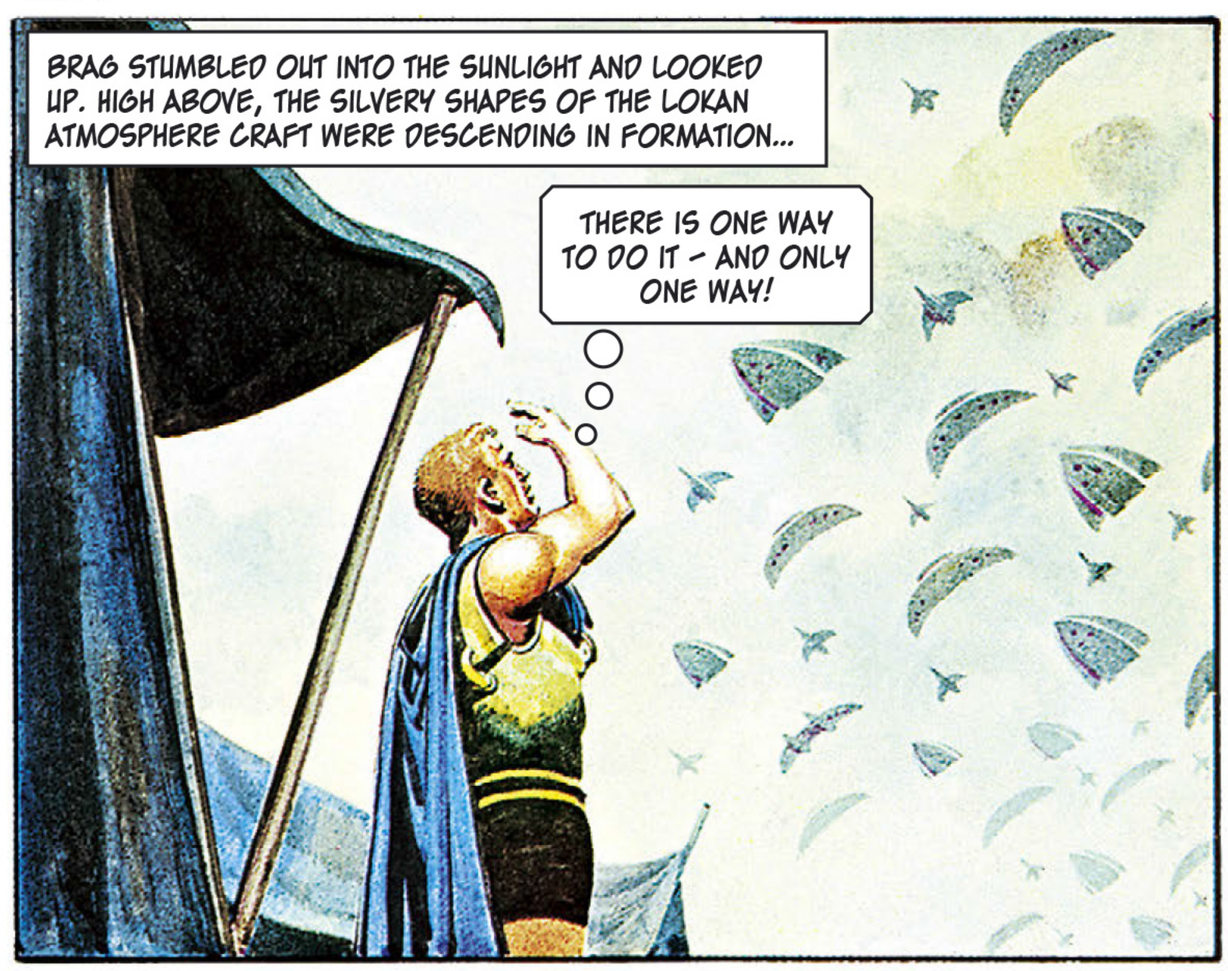
COMMANDING THE INVADERS WAS TRIGO'S TREACHEROUS SECOND BROTHER KLUD. HE RASPED AN ORDER...
BY NOW THE VORGS WILL ALL BE ENSLAVED! WE WILL DESCEND!

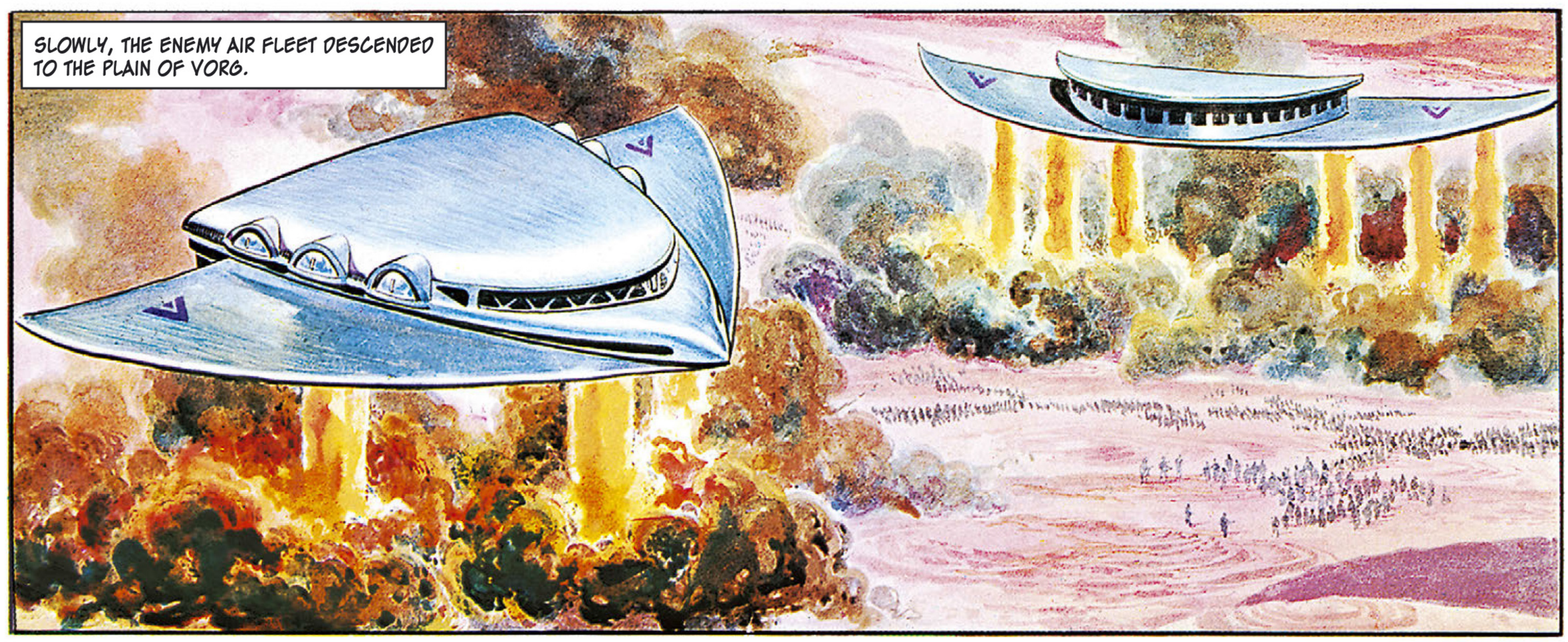
AS THE FAITHFUL BRAG KNELT GRIEF-STRICKEN BY TRIGO'S SIDE, IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT A HAND REACHED OUT AND TOUCHED HIM LIGHTLY ON HIS SHOULDER.

HE LOOKED UP - ONLY HALF-BELIEVING - INTO THE EYES OF HIS BELOVED BROTHER.
TRIGO! YOU STILL LIVE.
I HOPE... TO GO ON LIVING FOR A VERY LONG TIME, BRAG.

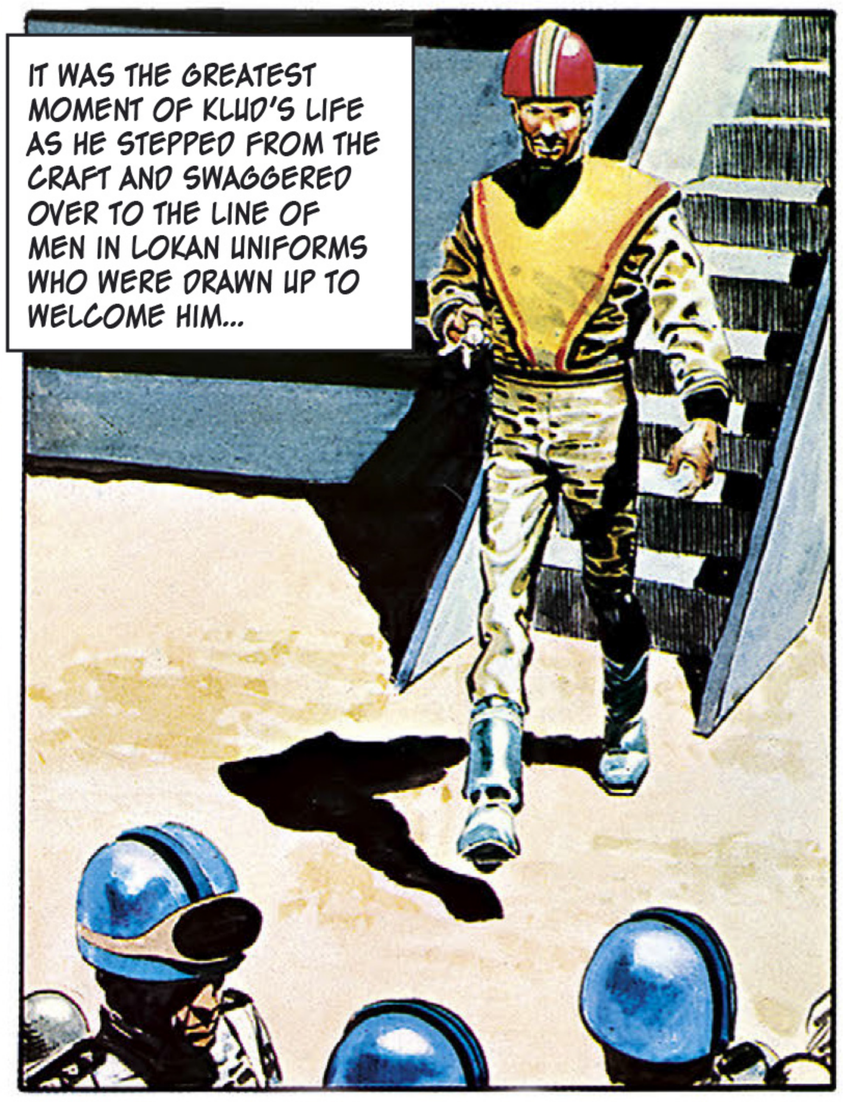
AT THAT MOMENT, A FRANTIC VORG WARRIOR BURST INTO THE TENT.
THE LOKAN AIR FLEET IS DESCENDING TO LAND! WHAT SHALL WE DO?
LOKAN AIR FLEET? THE LOKANS HERE?

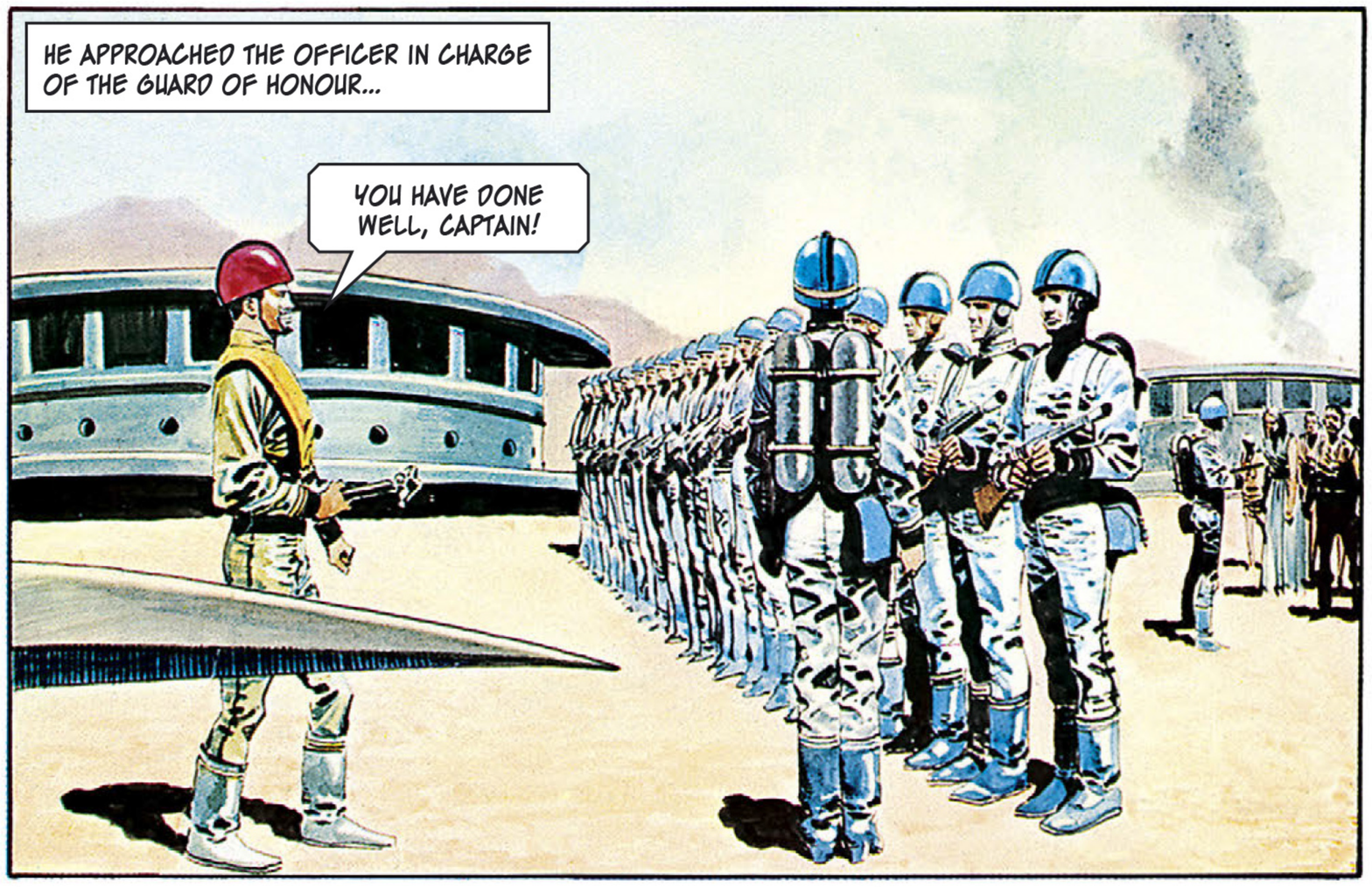

SWIFTLY, BRAG INFORMED HIS BROTHER OF WHAT HAD BEEN HAPPENING DURING HIS UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND TRIGO RAISED HIMSELF UP, THE FLAME OF LEADERSHIP BURNING BRIGHTLY IN HIS EYES...
THAT AIR FLEET MUST BE OURS! USE ANY MEANS AT YOUR DISPOSAL, BRAG, BUT CAPTURE THOSE MACHINES INTACT. WITH AN AIR FLEET, WE CAN BUILD AN EMPIRE TO LAST A THOUSAND YEARS!


BRAG STUMBLED OUT INTO THE SUNLIGHT AND LOOKED UP. HIGH ABOVE, THE SILVERY SHAPES OF THE LOKAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WERE DESCENDING IN FORMATION...
THERE IS ONE WAY TO DO IT - AND ONLY ONE WAY!

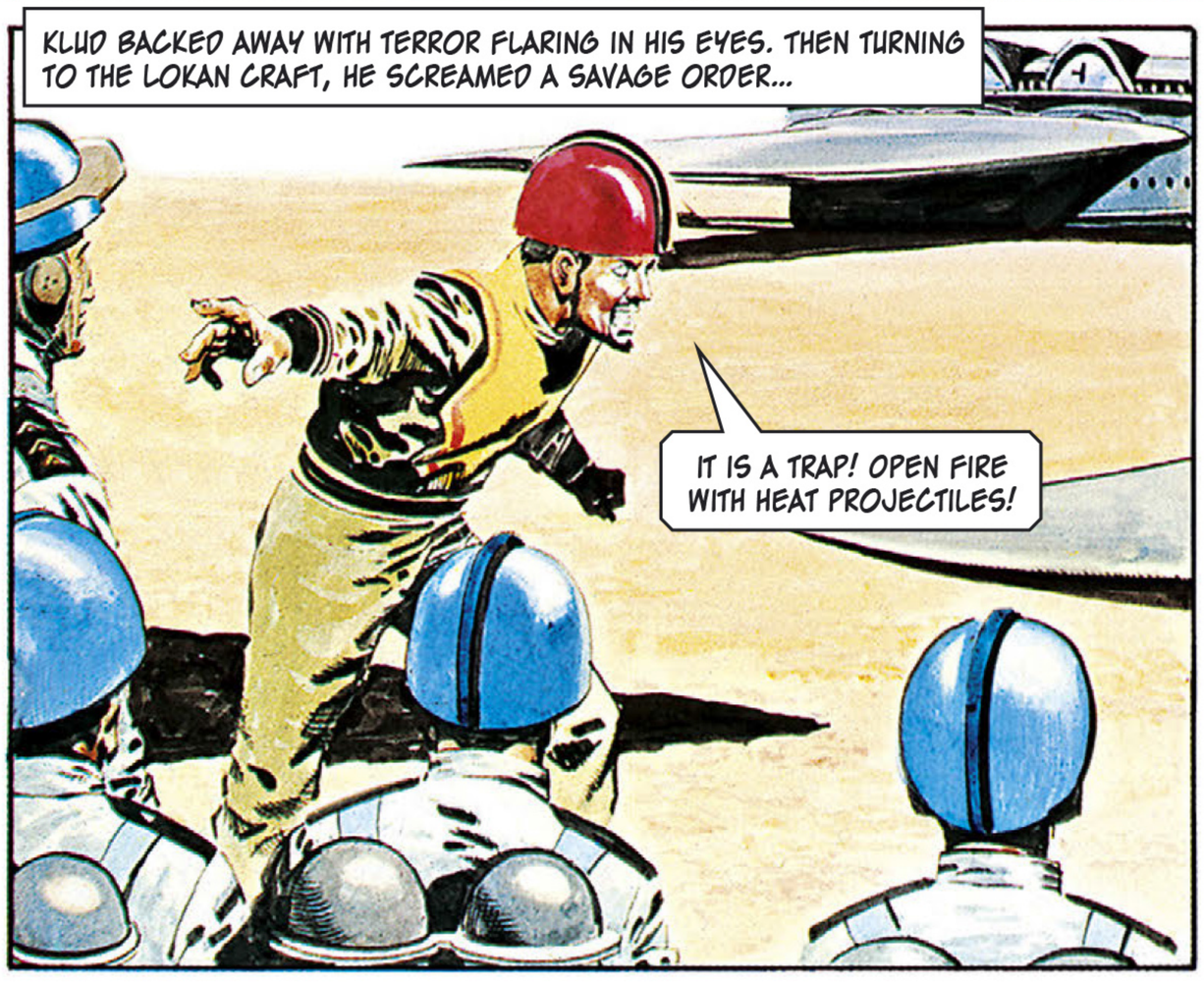

SLOWLY, THE ENEMY AIR FLEET DESCENDED TO THE PLAIN OF VORG.

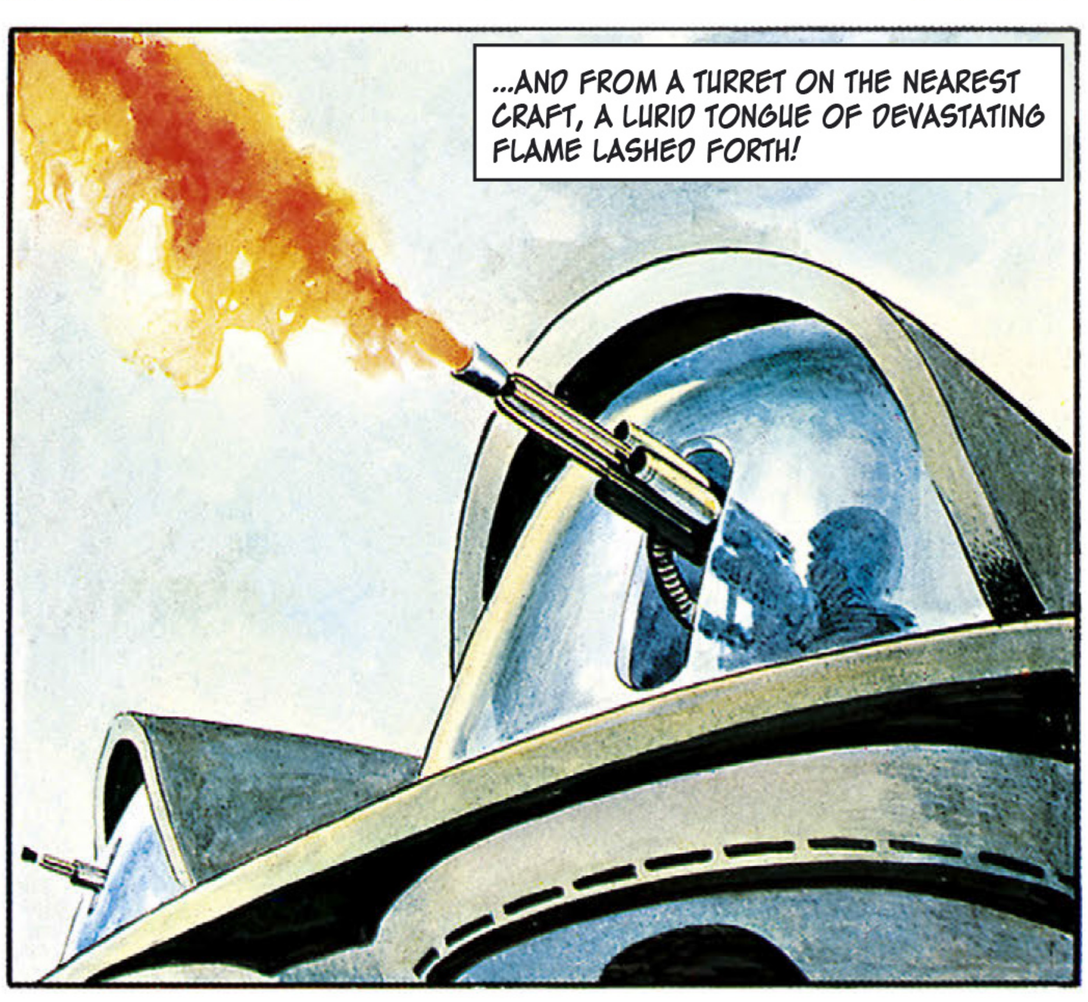
FROM THE LEADING CRAFT, TRIGO'S TREACHEROUS BROTHER, KLUD, GAZED DOWN IN TRIUMPH UPON THE SCENE BELOW. IT SEEMED TO HIM AS IF, DOWN THERE, THE LOKAN ARMY HAD SWEPT TO COMPLETE VICTORY.
I HAVE SUCCEEDED! THE VORG PEOPLE ARE ENSLAVED AND KING ZORTH OF LOKA WILL REWARD ME GREATLY!


IT WAS THE GREATEST MOMENT OF KLUD'S LIFE AS HE STEPPED FROM THE CRAFT AND SWAGGERED OVER TO THE LINE OF MEN IN LOKAN UNIFORMS WHO WERE DRAWN UP TO WELCOME HIM...

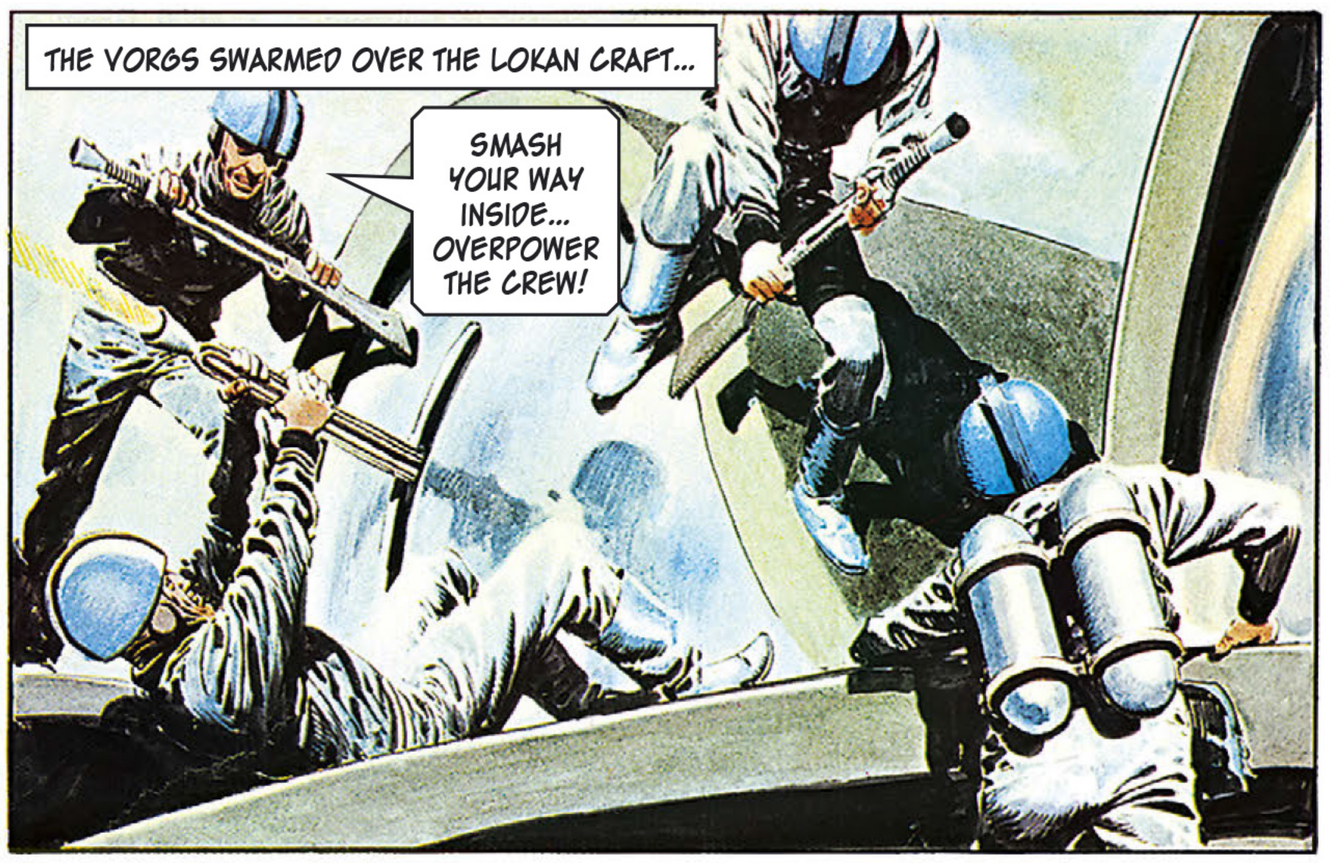

HE APPROACHED THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE GUARD OF HONOUR...
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, CAPTAIN!

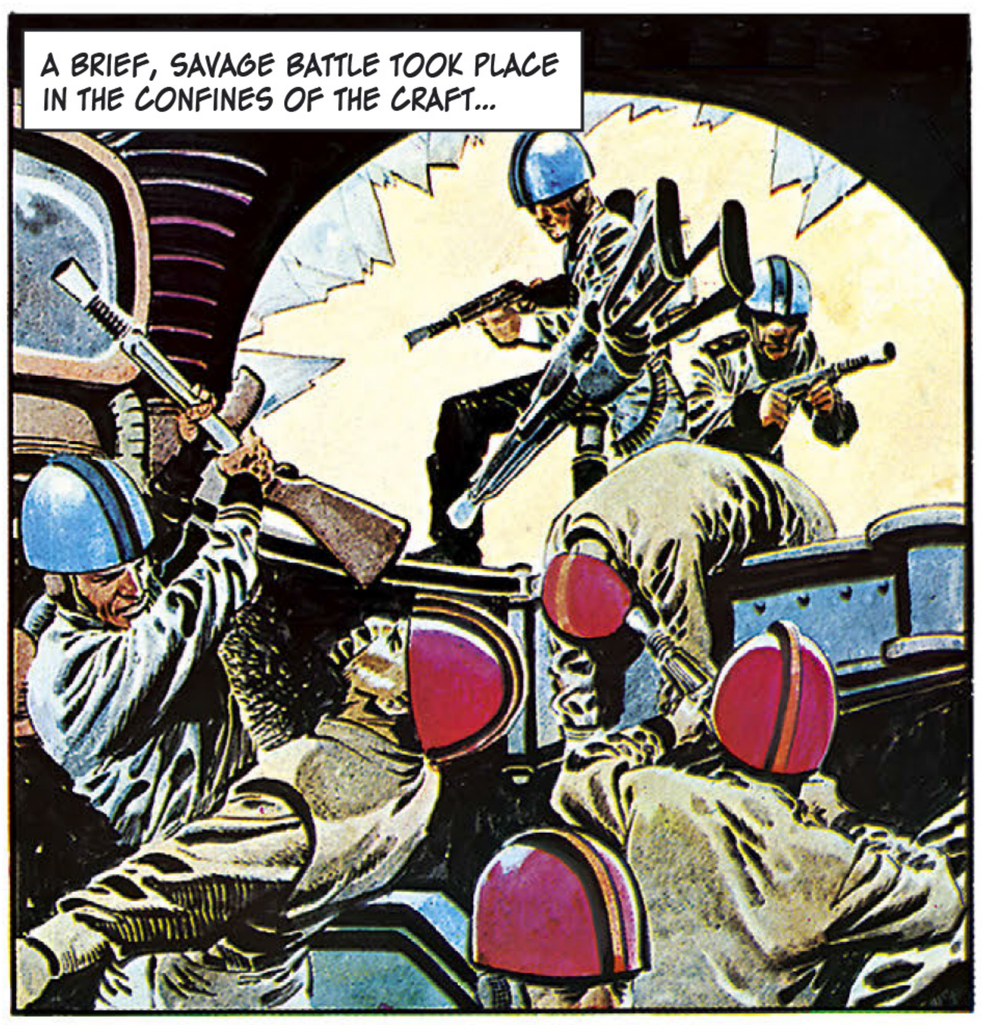
...AND FOUND HIMSELF LOOKING INTO THE MOCKING EYES OF BRAG!
I THANK YOU FOR THE COMPLIMENT, *BROTHER!*

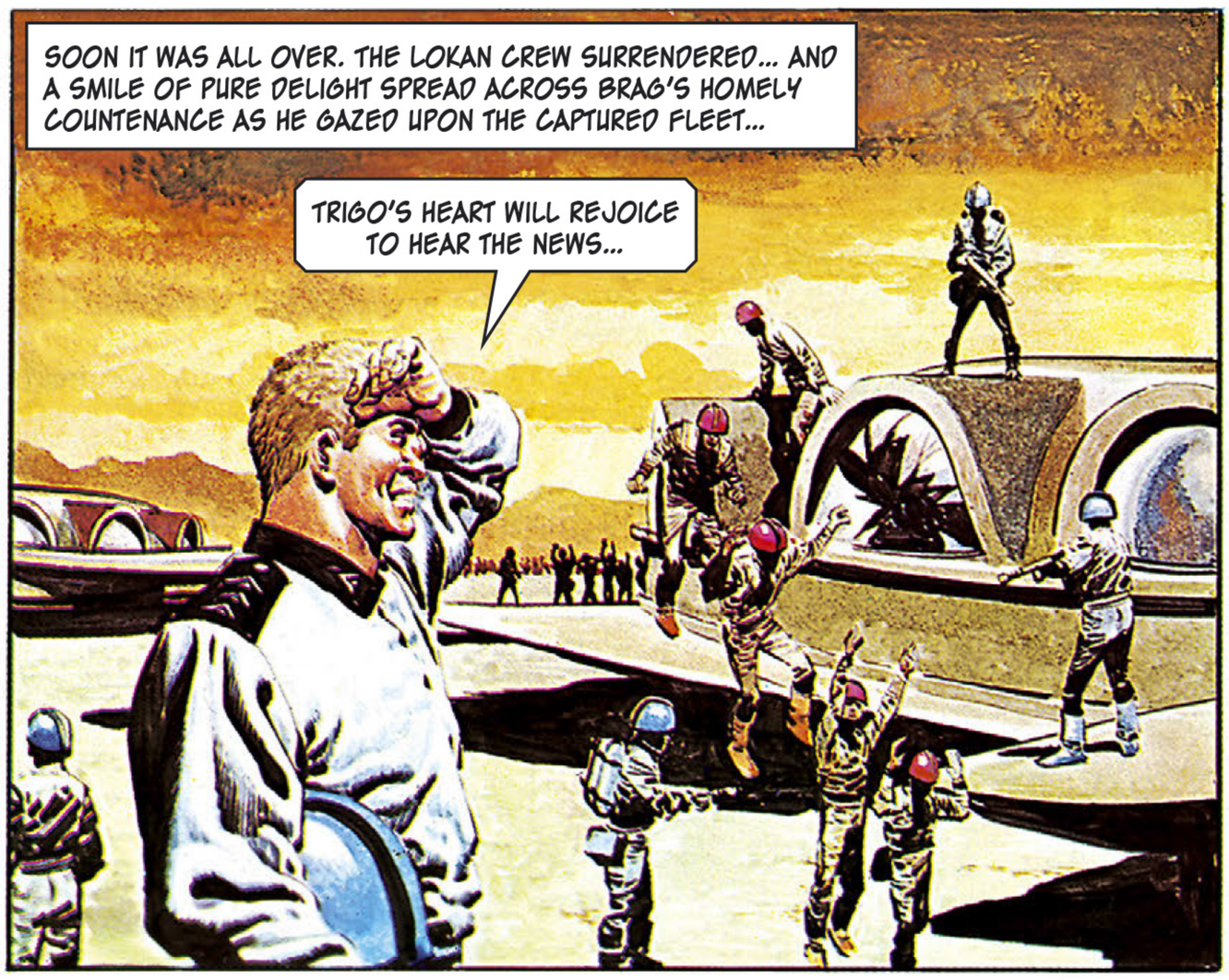

KLUD BACKED AWAY WITH TERROR FLARING IN HIS EYES. THEN TURNING TO THE LOKAN CRAFT, HE SCREAMED A SAVAGE ORDER...
IT IS A TRAP! OPEN FIRE WITH HEAT PROJECTILES!

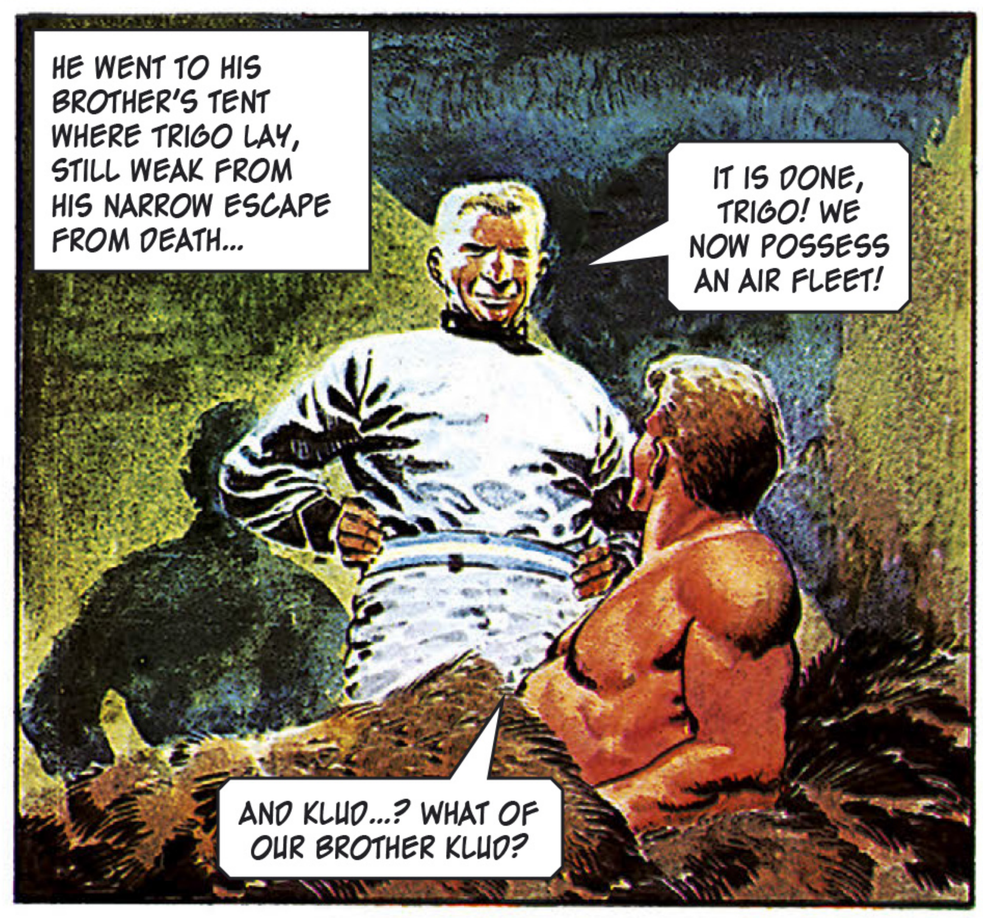

...AND FROM A TURRET ON THE NEAREST CRAFT, A LURID TONGUE OF DEVASTATING FLAME LASHED FORTH!

AS THE TONGUE OF FLAME LASHED FORTH FROM THE HEAT PROJECTILE ON THE NEAREST CRAFT, BRAG FLUNG HIMSELF TO THE GROUND... BUT THE TREACHEROUS KLUD REMAINED STANDING AND HE TOOK THE FULL FORCE!
THEN, LEAPING TO HIS FEET, THE VALIANT BRAG LED A CHARGE TOWARDS THE LOKAN CRAFT...
FORWARD, WARRIORS OF VORG! ONE MORE EFFORT AND THE ENEMY AIR FLEET IS OURS!

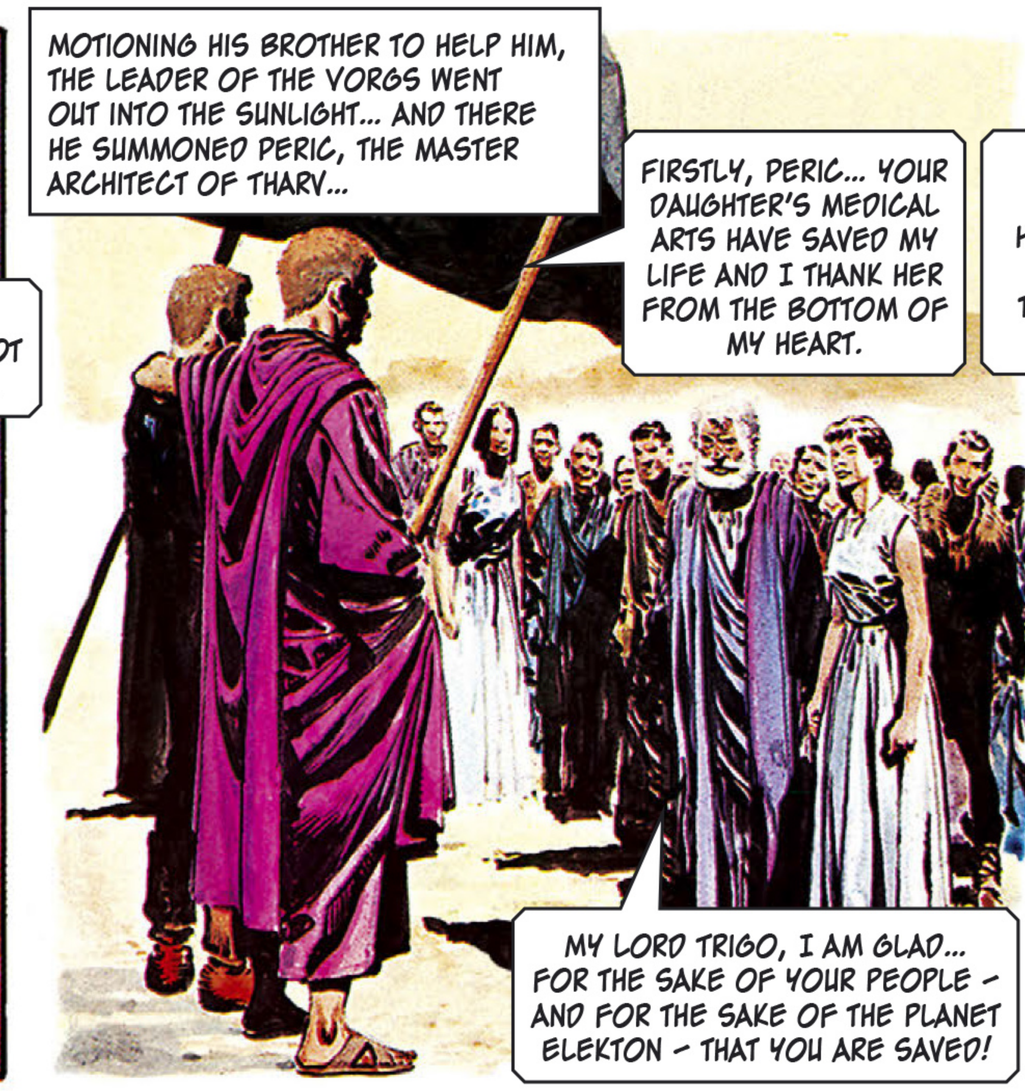

THE VORGS SWARMED OVER THE LOKAN CRAFT...
SMASH YOUR WAY INSIDE... OVERPOWER THE CREW!


A BRIEF, SAVAGE BATTLE TOOK PLACE IN THE CONFINES OF THE CRAFT...


SOON IT WAS ALL OVER. THE LOKAN CREW SURRENDERED... AND A SMILE OF PURE DELIGHT SPREAD ACROSS BRAG'S HOMELY COUNTENANCE AS HE GAZED UPON THE CAPTURED FLEET...
TRIGO'S HEART WILL REJOICE TO HEAR THE NEWS...


HE WENT TO HIS BROTHER'S TENT WHERE TRIGO LAY, STILL WEAK FROM HIS NARROW ESCAPE FROM DEATH...
IT IS DONE, TRIGO! WE NOW POSSESS AN AIR FLEET!
AND KLUD...? WHAT OF OUR BROTHER KLUD?

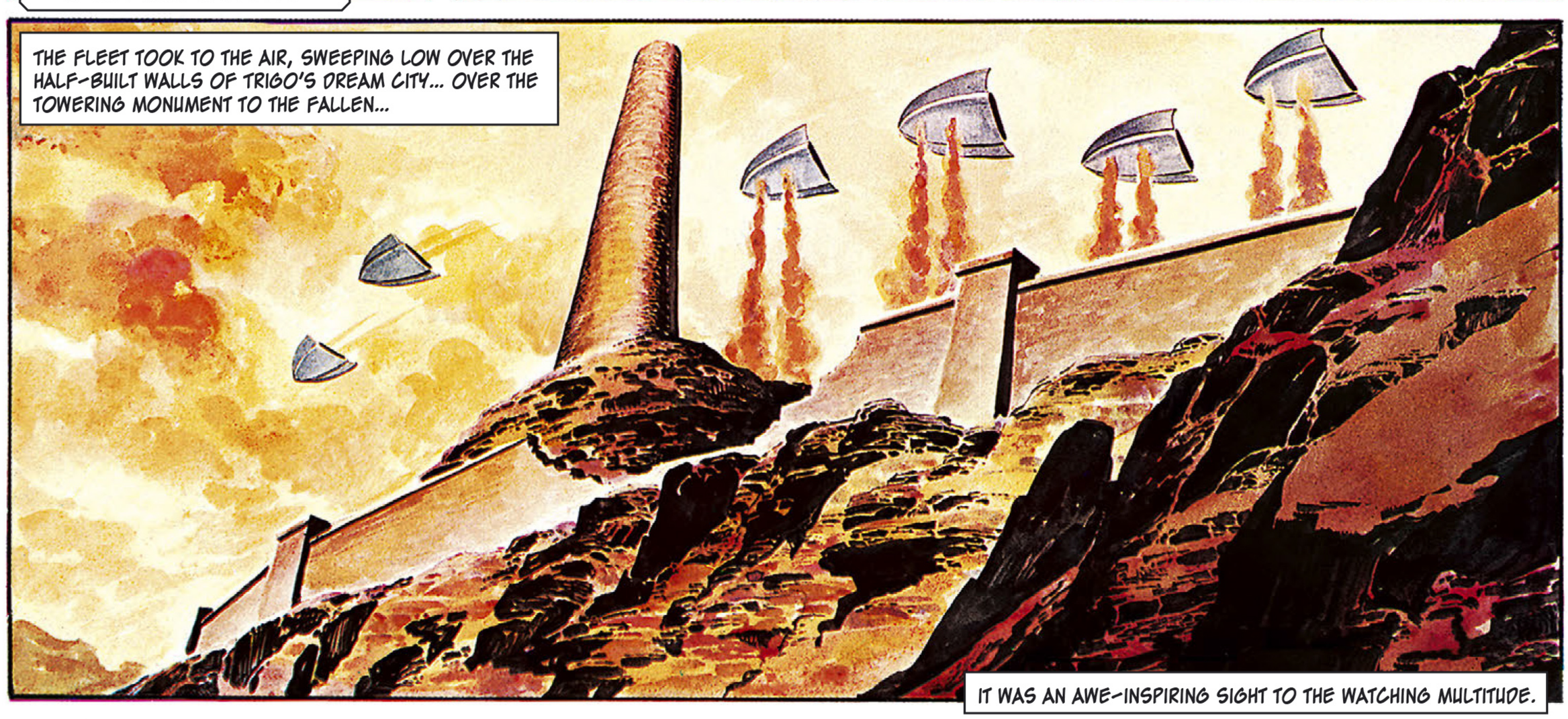
HE PAID THE PRICE FOR HIS TREACHERY... ACCIDENTALLY SLAIN BY ONE OF THE LOKAN GUNNERS...
IT IS JUST... I THANK THE STARS THAT HE DID NOT PERISH BY OUR HANDS...

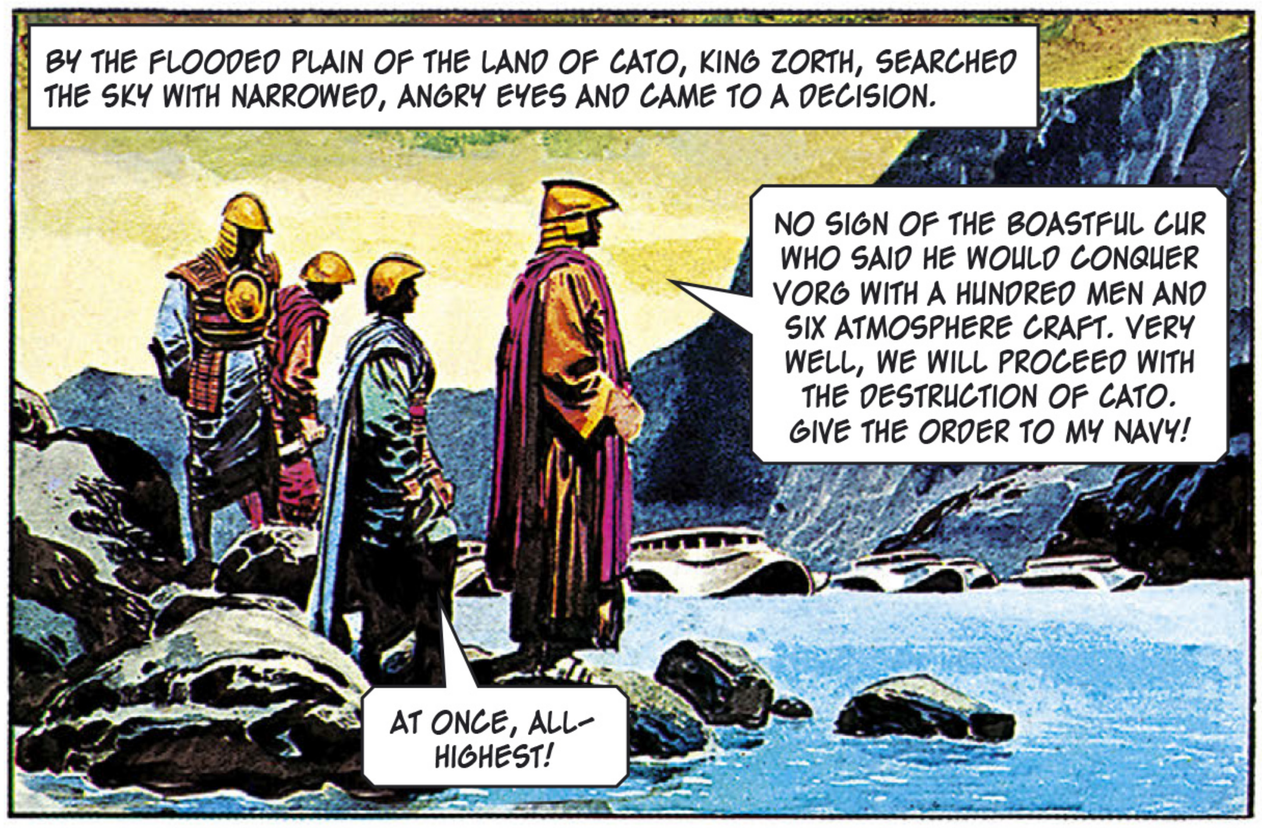

MOTIONING HIS BROTHER TO HELP HIM, THE LEADER OF THE VORGS WENT OUT INTO THE SUNLIGHT... AND THERE HE SUMMONED PERIC, THE MASTER ARCHITECT OF THARV...
FIRSTLY, PERIC... YOUR DAUGHTER'S MEDICAL ARTS HAVE SAVED MY LIFE AND I THANK HER FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.
MY LORD TRIGO, I AM GLAD... FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR PEOPLE – AND FOR THE SAKE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON – THAT YOU ARE SAVED!

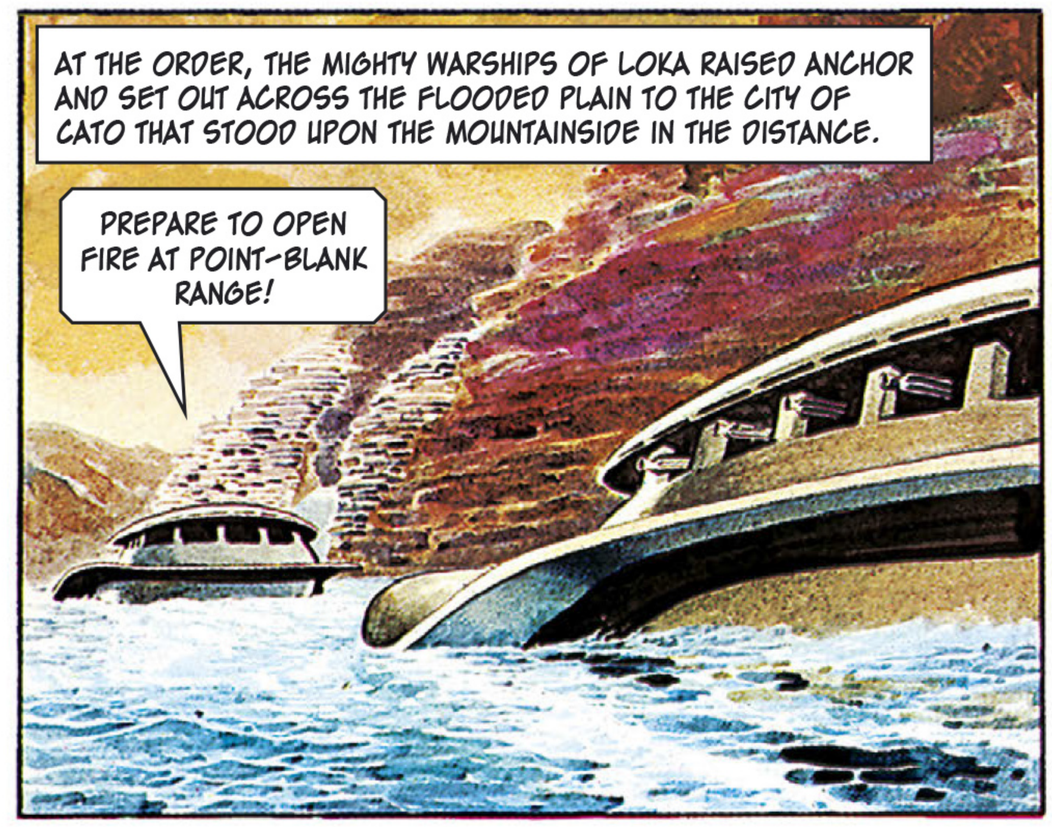
TRIGO EYED THE AIR FLEET...
AMONGST YOUR PEOPLE, THE THARVS WHO HAVE TAKEN REFUGE WITH US, THERE MUST BE MANY WITH THE KNOWLEDGE TO FLY AND NAVIGATE THOSE CRAFT...
INDEED THERE ARE, MY LORD. THE SCIENTISTS OF THARV INVENTED THOSE CRAFT... THE EVIL LOKANS ONLY COPIED US.

THE FLAME OF BATTLE BURNT IN THE FINE EYES OF THE LEADER OF THE VORGS...
THEN, WITH OUR SMALL FLEET, WE WILL TEACH THE TYRANT KING ZORTH OF LOKA A LESSON THAT HE WILL LONG REMEMBER!

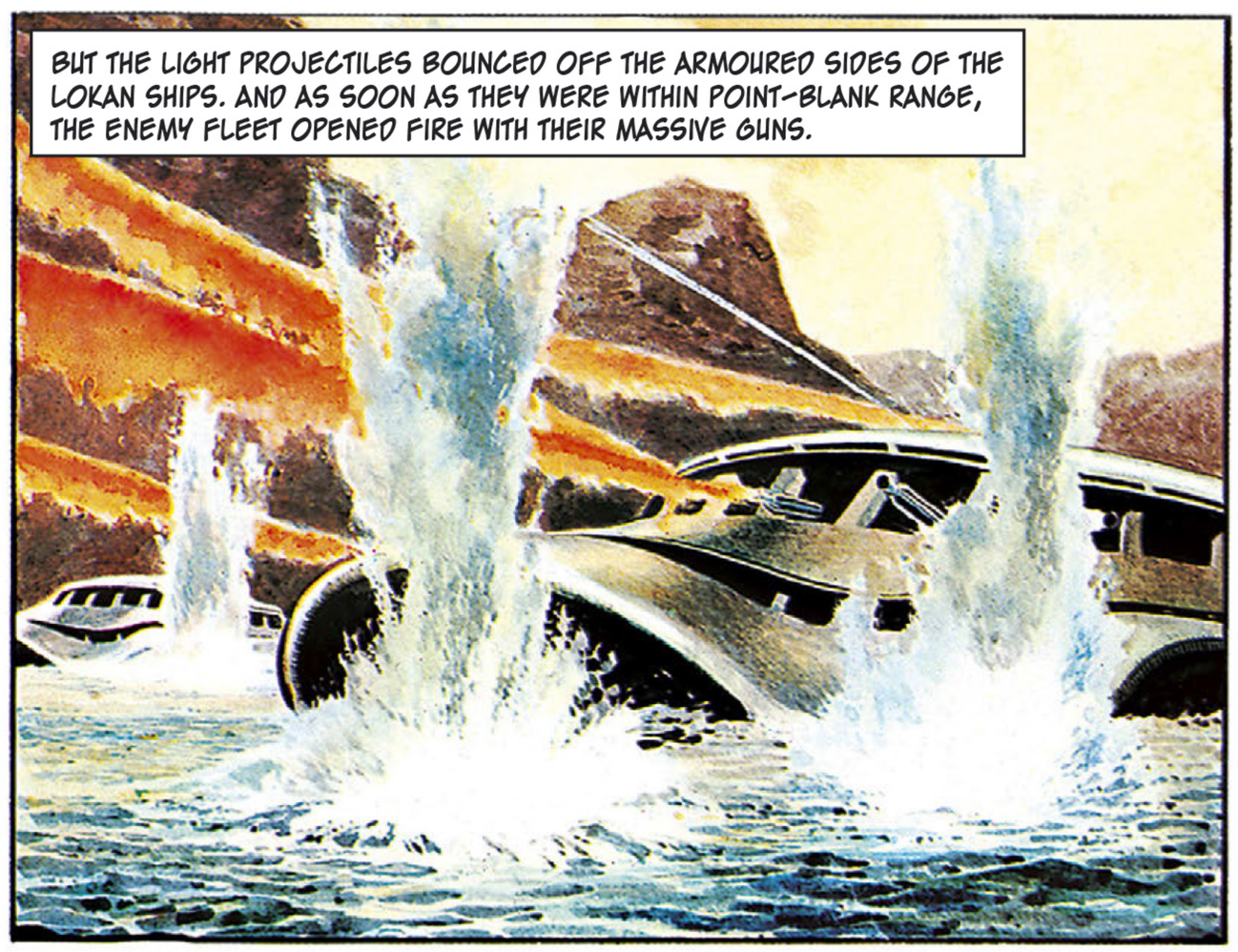
AT DAWN THE NEXT DAY, TRIGO STEPPED INTO THE LEADING CRAFT OF HIS FLEET CLAD IN THE TRAPPINGS OF WAR...
WE GO TO AVENGE OUR PEOPLE!

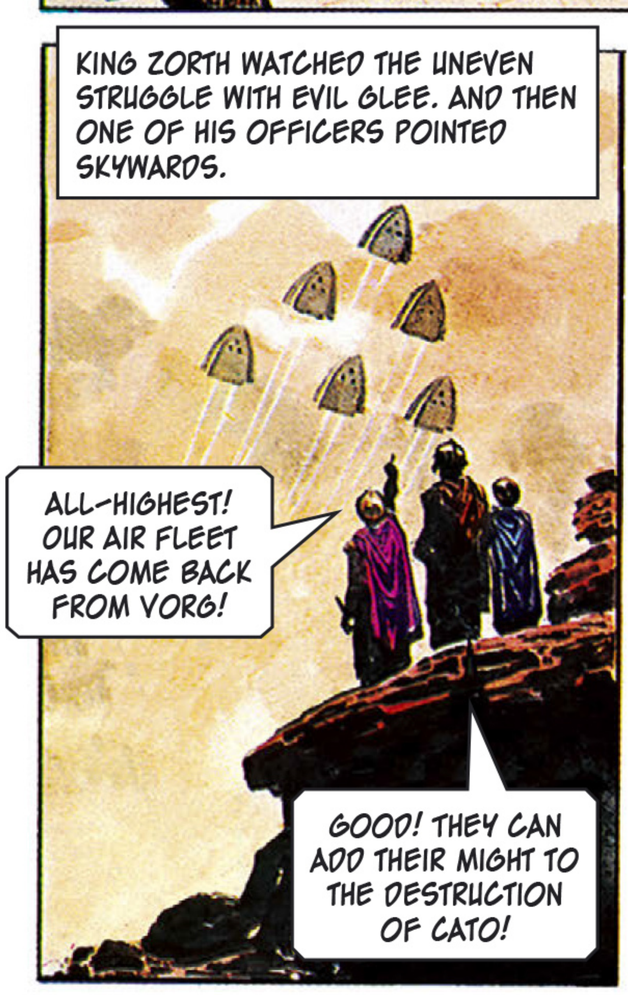

THE FLEET TOOK TO THE AIR, SWEEPING LOW OVER THE HALF-BUILT WALLS OF TRIGO'S DREAM CITY... OVER THE TOWERING MONUMENT TO THE FALLEN...
IT WAS AN AWE-INSPIRING SIGHT TO THE WATCHING MULTITUDE.

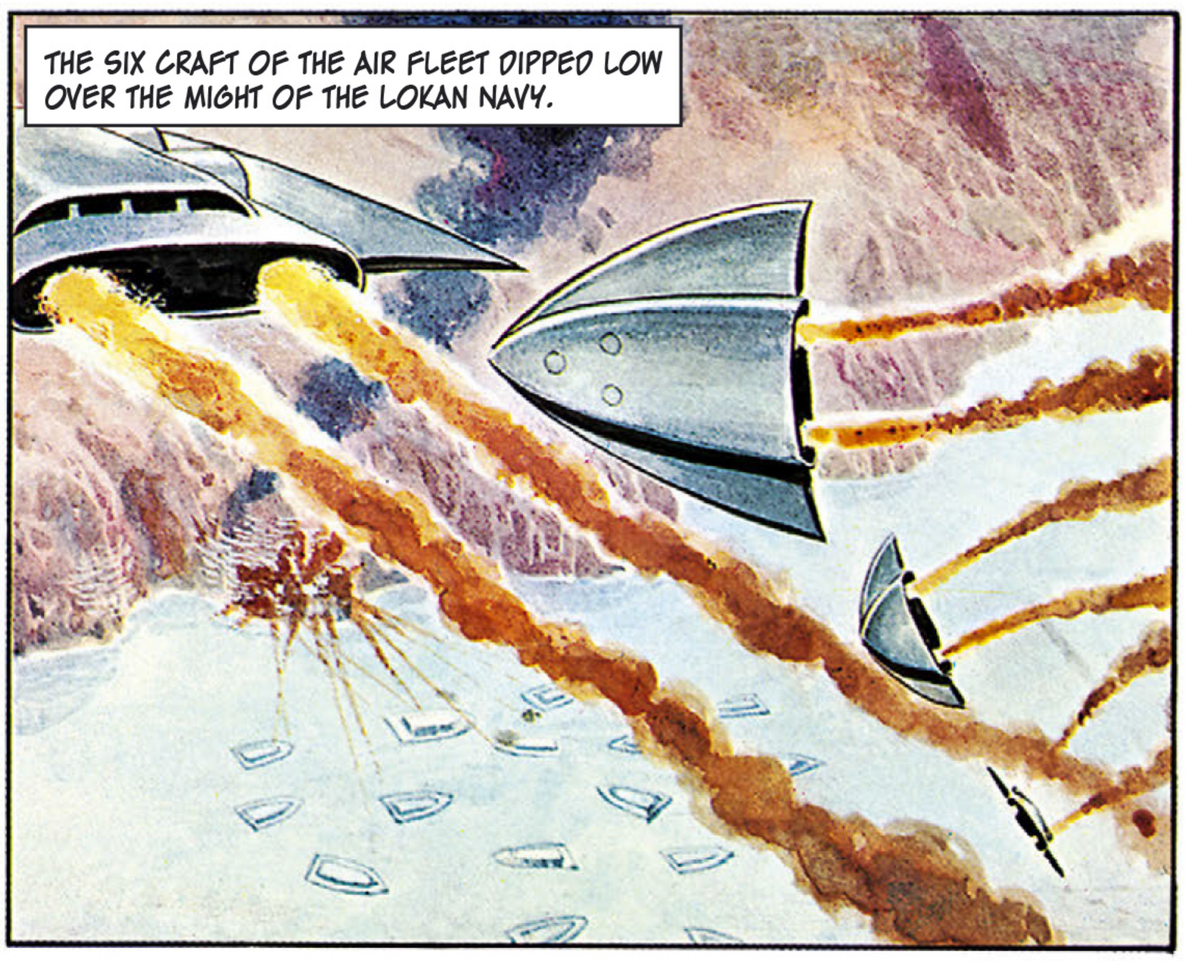

BY THE FLOODED PLAIN OF THE LAND OF CATO, KING ZORTH, SEARCHED THE SKY WITH NARROWED, ANGRY EYES AND CAME TO A DECISION.
NO SIGN OF THE BOASTFUL CUR WHO SAID HE WOULD CONQUER VORG WITH A HUNDRED MEN AND SIX ATMOSPHERE CRAFT. VERY WELL, WE WILL PROCEED WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF CATO. GIVE THE ORDER TO MY NAVY!
AT ONCE, ALL-HIGHEST!


AT THE ORDER, THE MIGHTY WARSHIPS OF LOKA RAISED ANCHOR AND SET OUT ACROSS THE FLOODED PLAIN TO THE CITY OF CATO THAT STOOD UPON THE MOUNTAINSIDE IN THE DISTANCE.
PREPARE TO OPEN FIRE AT POINT-BLANK RANGE!

DETERMINED TO FIGHT TO THE LAST MAN AND THE LAST GUN, THE GALLANT PEOPLE OF LITTLE CATO OPENED FIRE AS SOON AS THE WARSHIPS CAME WITHIN RANGE.

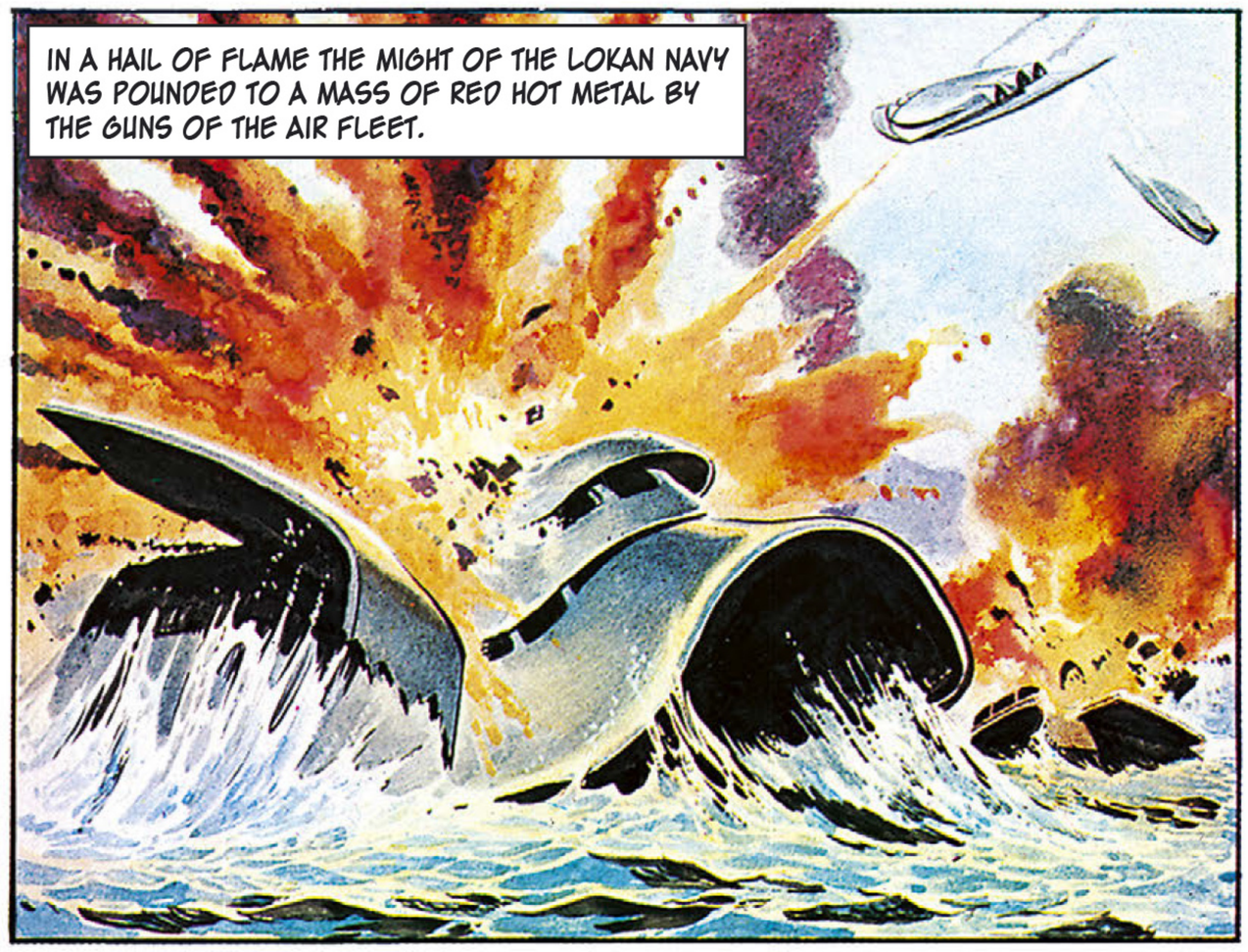

BUT THE LIGHT PROJECTILES BOUNCED OFF THE ARMOURED SIDES OF THE LOKAN SHIPS. AND AS SOON AS THEY WERE WITHIN POINT-BLANK RANGE, THE ENEMY FLEET OPENED FIRE WITH THEIR MASSIVE GUNS.


KING ZORTH WATCHED THE UNEVEN STRUGGLE WITH EVIL GLEE. AND THEN ONE OF HIS OFFICERS POINTED SKYWARDS.
ALL-HIGHEST! OUR AIR FLEET HAS COME BACK FROM VORG!
GOOD! THEY CAN ADD THEIR MIGHT TO THE DESTRUCTION OF CATO!


THE SIX CRAFT OF THE AIR FLEET DIPPED LOW OVER THE MIGHT OF THE LOKAN NAVY.

IN THE LEADING CRAFT ,TRIGO OF VORG LOOKED DOWN UPON THE ENEMY FLEET.
WE HAVE THEM NOW. THEY SOUGHT TO DESTROY US AND NOW WE WILL DESTROY THEM! OPEN FIRE!

INSTANTS LATER, AN ICY CHILL CLUTCHED AT THE EVIL HEART OF THE WATCHING KING ZORTH.
ALL-HIGHEST! THE AIR FLEET IS FIRING ON THE NAVY!
THE TRAITORS! THIS IS BLACK TREACHERY!


IN A HAIL OF FLAME THE MIGHT OF THE LOKAN NAVY WAS POUNDED TO A MASS OF RED HOT METAL BY THE GUNS OF THE AIR FLEET.

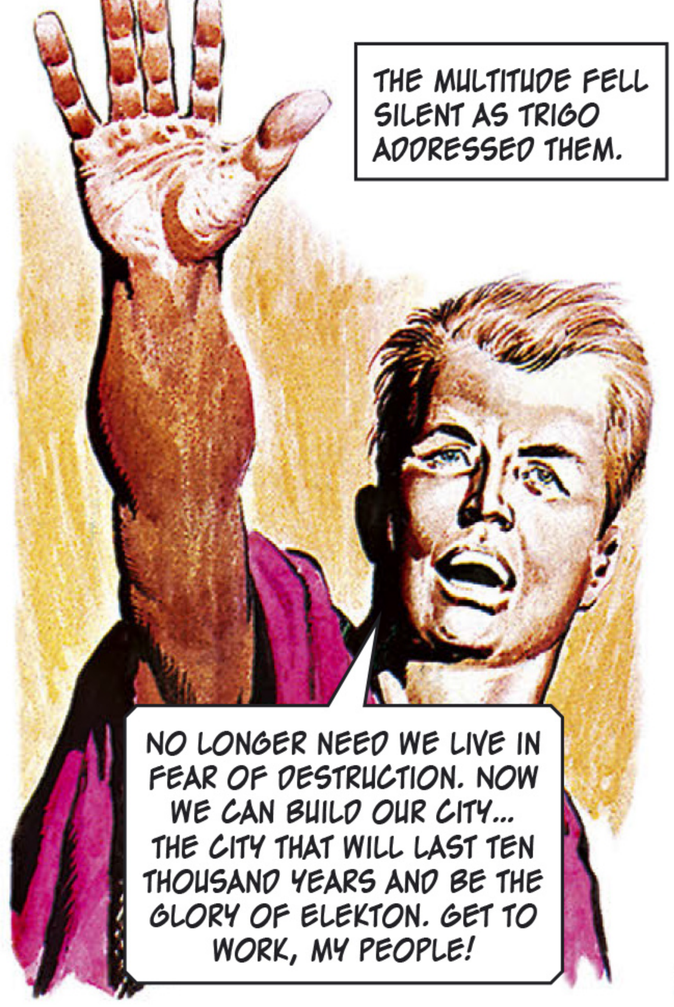
AS THE LAST WRECK PLUNGED BELOW THE SURFACE, TRIGO GAVE THE ORDER TO CEASE FIRE.
SET COURSE FOR VORG!

KING ZORTH SHOOK HIS FIST SAVAGELY AFTER THE VANISHING AIR FLEET.
TEN THOUSAND CURSES UPON YOU!

HIS OFFICERS BACKED AWAY, FEARFUL OF THE FURY OF THEIR LEADER.
MY NAVY GONE, MY AIR FLEET MAULED, MY GROUND FORCES CUT TO RIBBONS... AND ALL MY DREAMS OF PLANET CONQUEST CRUMBLED TO DUST!

AT SUNSET, THE TATTERED REMAINS OF ZORTH'S ONCE-ARROGANT FORCES SET OFF BACK FOR THEIR LONG RETURN JOURNEY TO LOKA - ON FOOT.
AND WITH THE GREAT RETREAT, THE PLANET ELEKTON WAS SAFE FOR YEARS TO COME FROM THE BRUTAL AMBITIONS OF THE TYRANT KING.

BACK IN THE LAND OF VORG, TRIGO LANDED TO RECEIVE THE WILD WELCOME OF HIS PEOPLE.
LONG LIVE TRIGO THE MIGHTY!


THE MULTITUDE FELL SILENT AS TRIGO ADDRESSED THEM.
NO LONGER NEED WE LIVE IN FEAR OF DESTRUCTION. NOW WE CAN BUILD OUR CITY... THE CITY THAT WILL LAST TEN THOUSAND YEARS AND BE THE GLORY OF ELEKTON. GET TO WORK, MY PEOPLE!

AND IT IS AT THIS POINT IN THE STORY OF THE RISE AND FALL OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE THAT THE FIRST BOOK OF TRIGO ENDS...

II

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

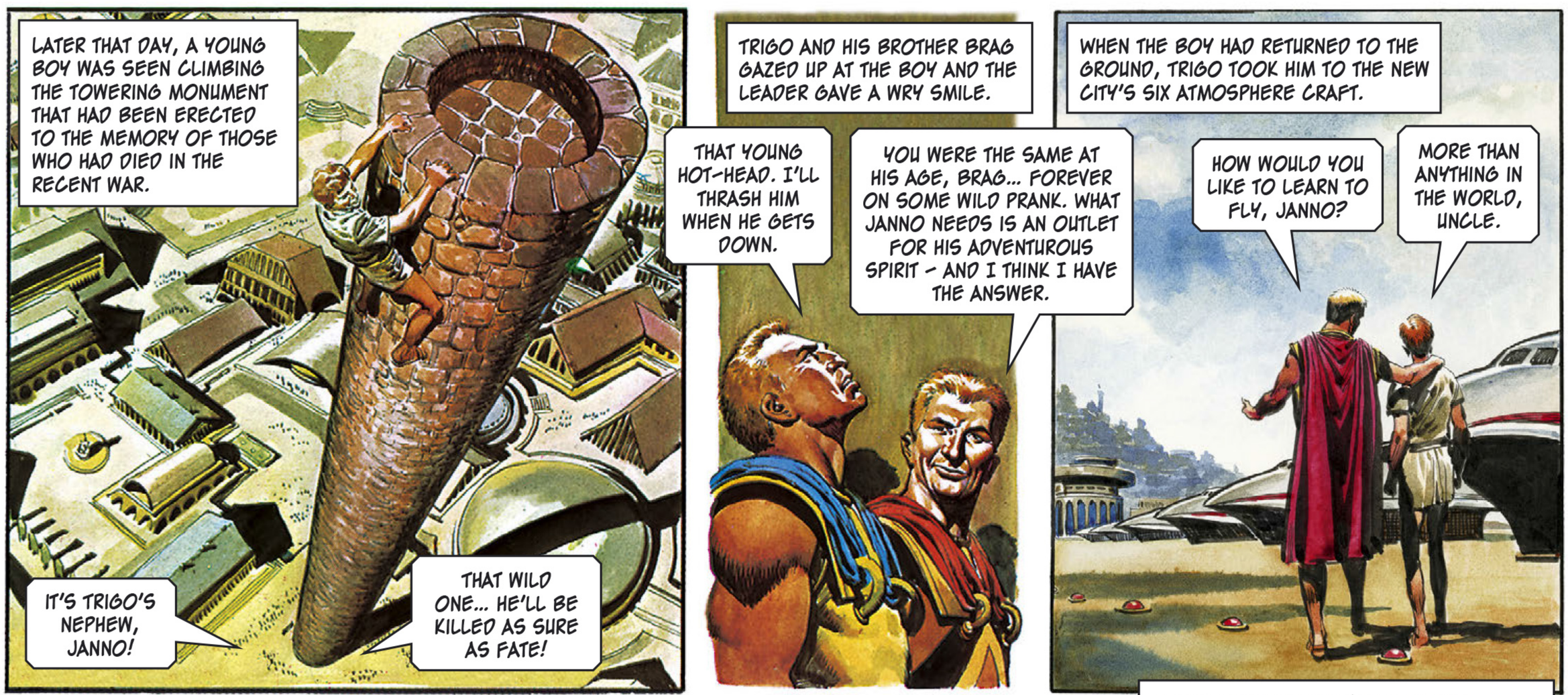
CRASH IN THE JUNGLE

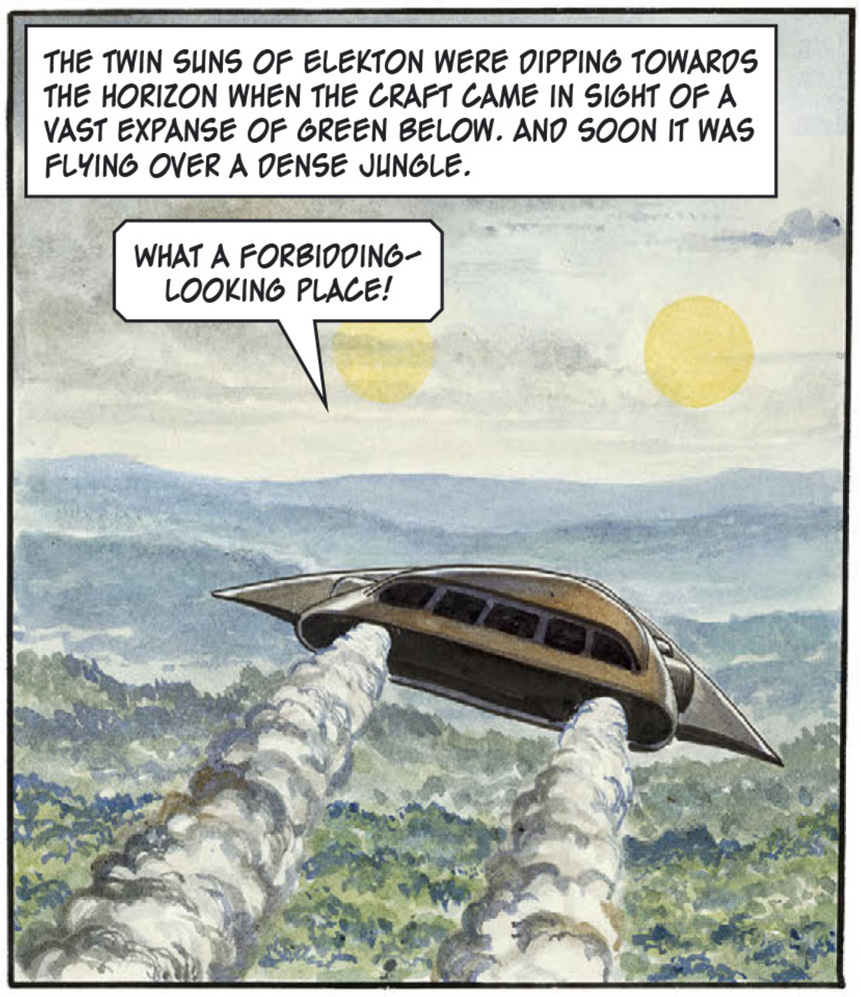
Originally published in ***Ranger***

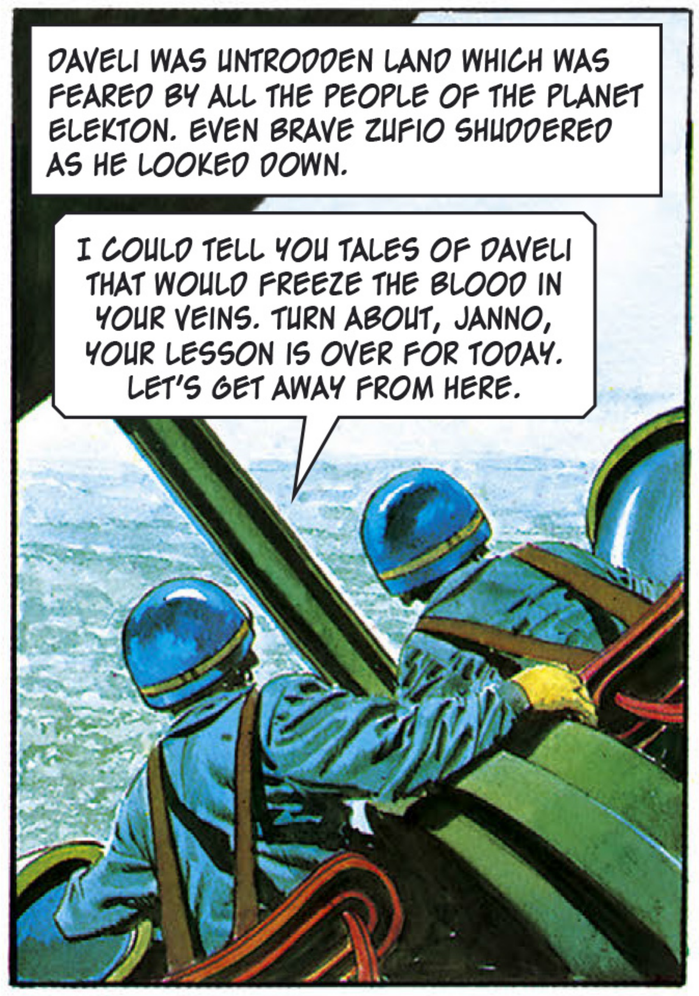
5th February 1966 – 19th February 1966

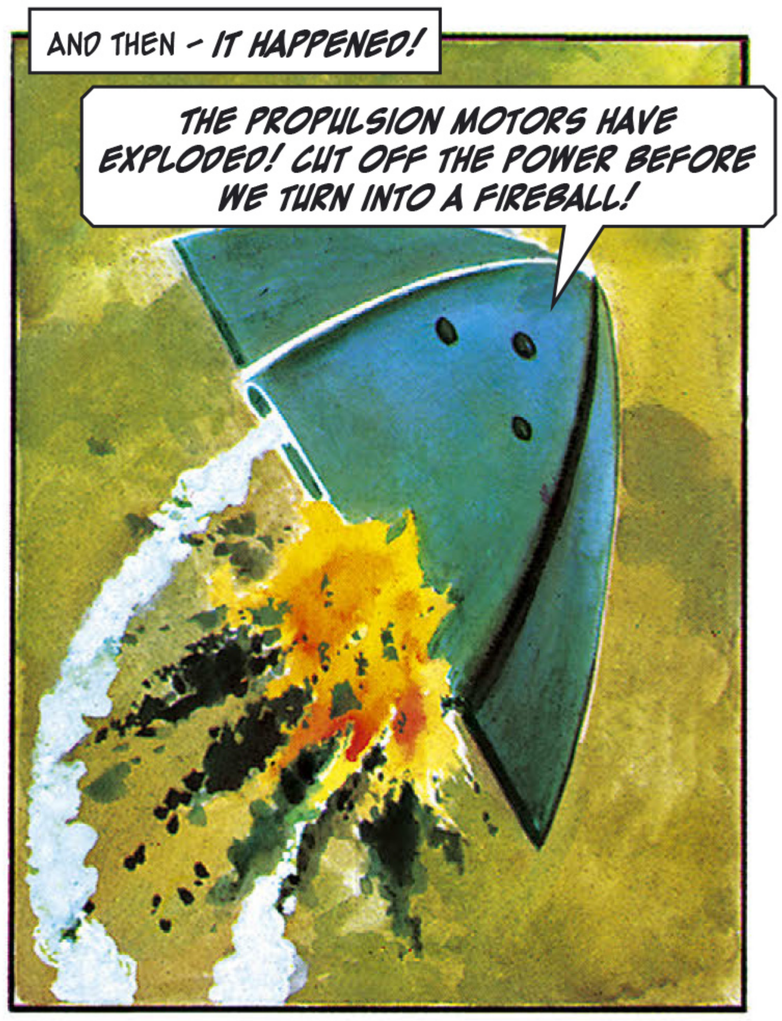
THIS IS THE STORY OF A NATION THAT AROSE ON THE PLANET ELEKTON, WHICH IS MILLIONS OF MILES AWAY FROM EARTH. THE NATION WAS FOUNDED BY TRIGO, A GREAT LEADER, WHO, HAVING DEFEATED HIS COUNTRY'S ENEMIES, BUILT THE SPLENDID CITY OF TRIGAN NAMED AFTER HIMSELF...

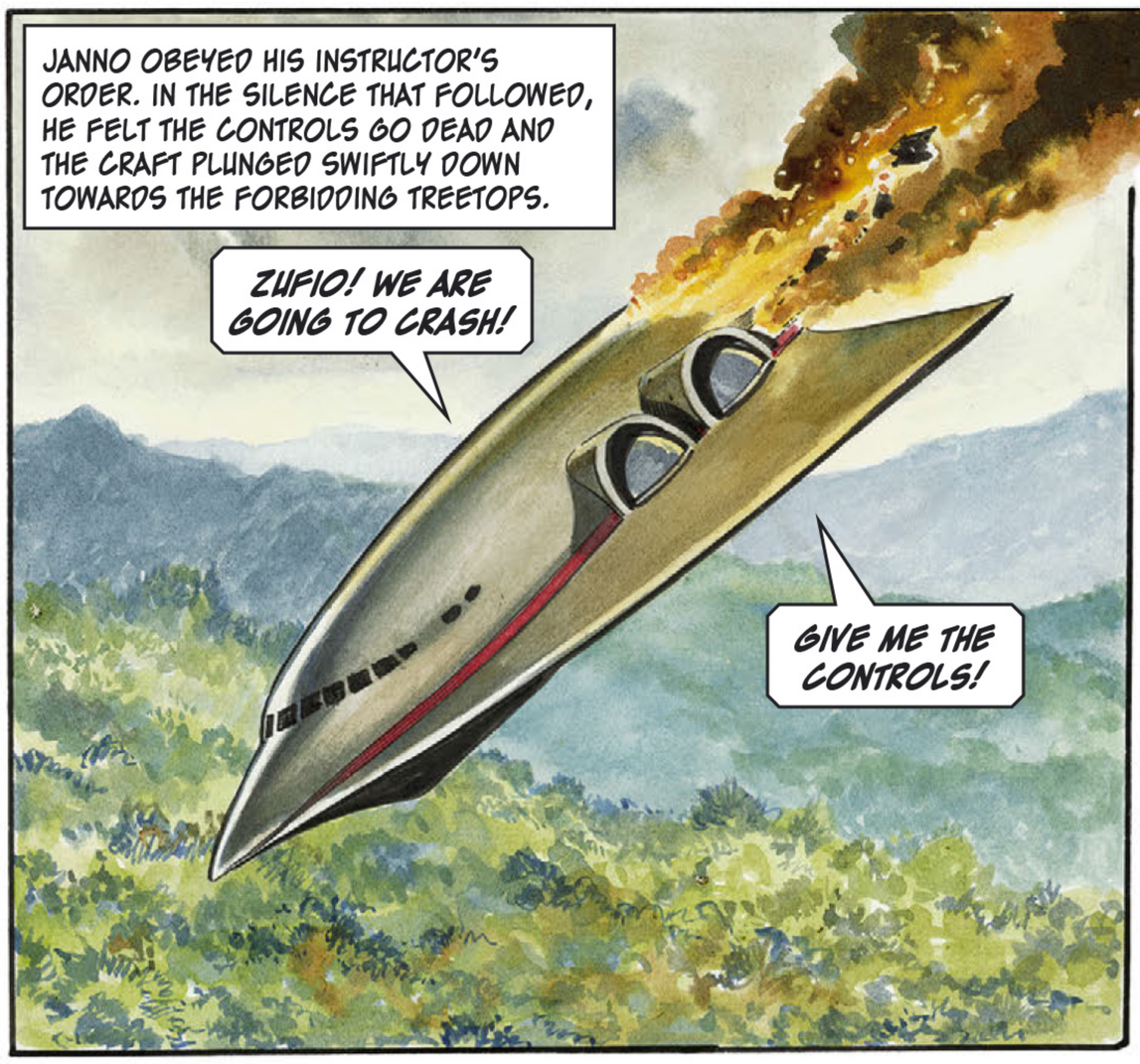
FROM THIS DAY, OUR CITY SHALL BE CALLED TRIGAN! MAY IT STAND FOR TEN THOUSAND YEARS!



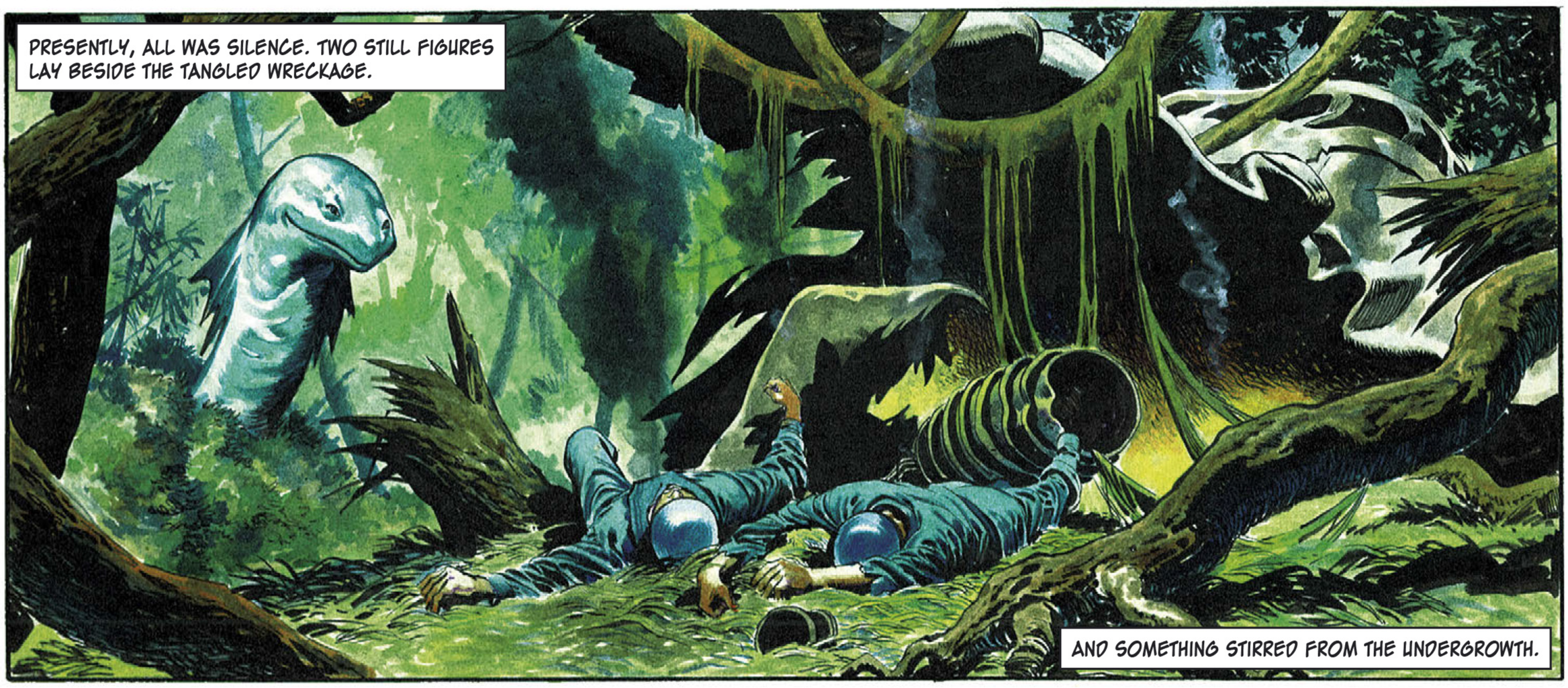

THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON WERE DIPPING TOWARDS THE HORIZON WHEN THE CRAFT CAME IN SIGHT OF A VAST EXPANSE OF GREEN BELOW. AND SOON IT WAS FLYING OVER A DENSE JUNGLE.
WHAT A FORBIDDING-LOOKING PLACE!


DAVELI WAS UNTRODDEN LAND WHICH WAS FEARED BY ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON. EVEN BRAVE ZUFIO SHUDDERED AS HE LOOKED DOWN.
I COULD TELL YOU TALES OF DAVELI THAT WOULD FREEZE THE BLOOD IN YOUR VEINS. TURN ABOUT, JANNO, YOUR LESSON IS OVER FOR TODAY. LET'S GET AWAY FROM HERE.


AND THEN – IT HAPPENED!
THE PROPULSION MOTORS HAVE EXPLODED! CUT OFF THE POWER BEFORE WE TURN INTO A FIREBALL!


JANNO OBEYED HIS INSTRUCTOR'S ORDER. IN THE SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED, HE FELT THE CONTROLS GO DEAD AND THE CRAFT PLUNGED SWIFTLY DOWN TOWARDS THE FORBIDDING TREETOPS.
ZUFIO! WE ARE GOING TO CRASH!
GIVE ME THE CONTROLS!

INSTANTS LATER, EVEN WITH ZUFIO'S EXPERT HANDS AT THE CONTROLS, THE CRAFT PLUNGED THROUGH THE DENSE TREETOPS AND TORE ITSELF TO PIECES IN A TRAIL OF FLAME AND TORTURED METAL.

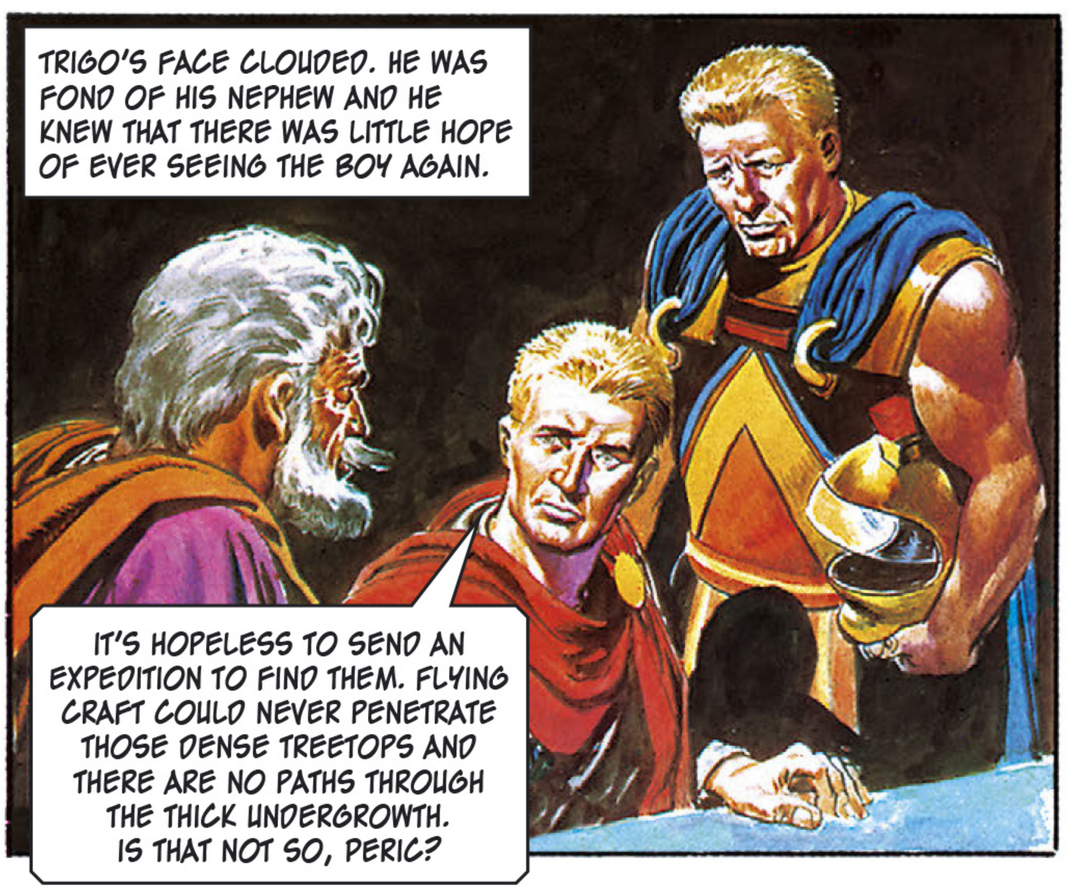

PRESENTLY, ALL WAS SILENCE. TWO STILL FIGURES LAY BESIDE THE TANGLED WRECKAGE.
AND SOMETHING STIRRED FROM THE UNDERGROWTH.

JANNO RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS AND RAISED HIS HEAD TO SEE A FEARSOME PAIR OF EYES GLARING DOWN UPON HIM.
BY THE STARS... ONE OF THE MONSTERS OF DAVELI!

AN INSTANT LATER, THE UNCANNY NOTES OF A STRANGE HORN ECHOED THROUGH THE SILENCE OF THE JUNGLE... AND THE HUGE REPTILE TURNED ITS HIDEOUS HEAD OBEDIENTLY TOWARDS THE SOUND.

AS IF AT AN ORDER, THE REPTILE GLIDED SILENTLY AWAY INTO THE DENSE UNDERGROWTH... AND THEN JANNO AND HIS UNCONSCIOUS COMPANION WERE SURROUNDED BY A RING OF BRIGHT SPEAR POINTS.
WHAT... WHAT DO YOU WANT?

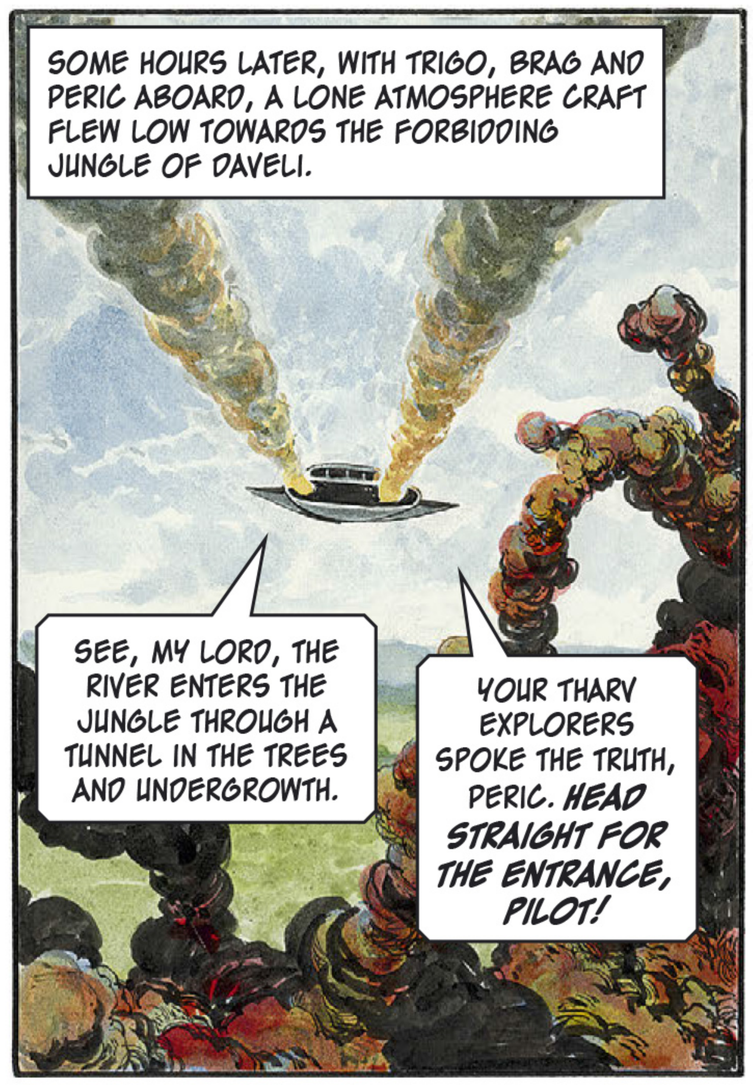
BACK IN THE CITY OF TRIGAN NEXT MORNING, TRIGO HAD AN EARLY VISITOR. HIS BROTHER BRAG ARRIVED WITH GRAVE NEWS...
BRAG! WHAT AILS YOU?
IT'S MY SON, JANNO! HE AND ZUFIO NEVER RETURNED FROM THAT FLIGHT YESTERDAY... AND THEY WERE LAST SEEN HEADING IN THE DIRECTION OF DAVELI!

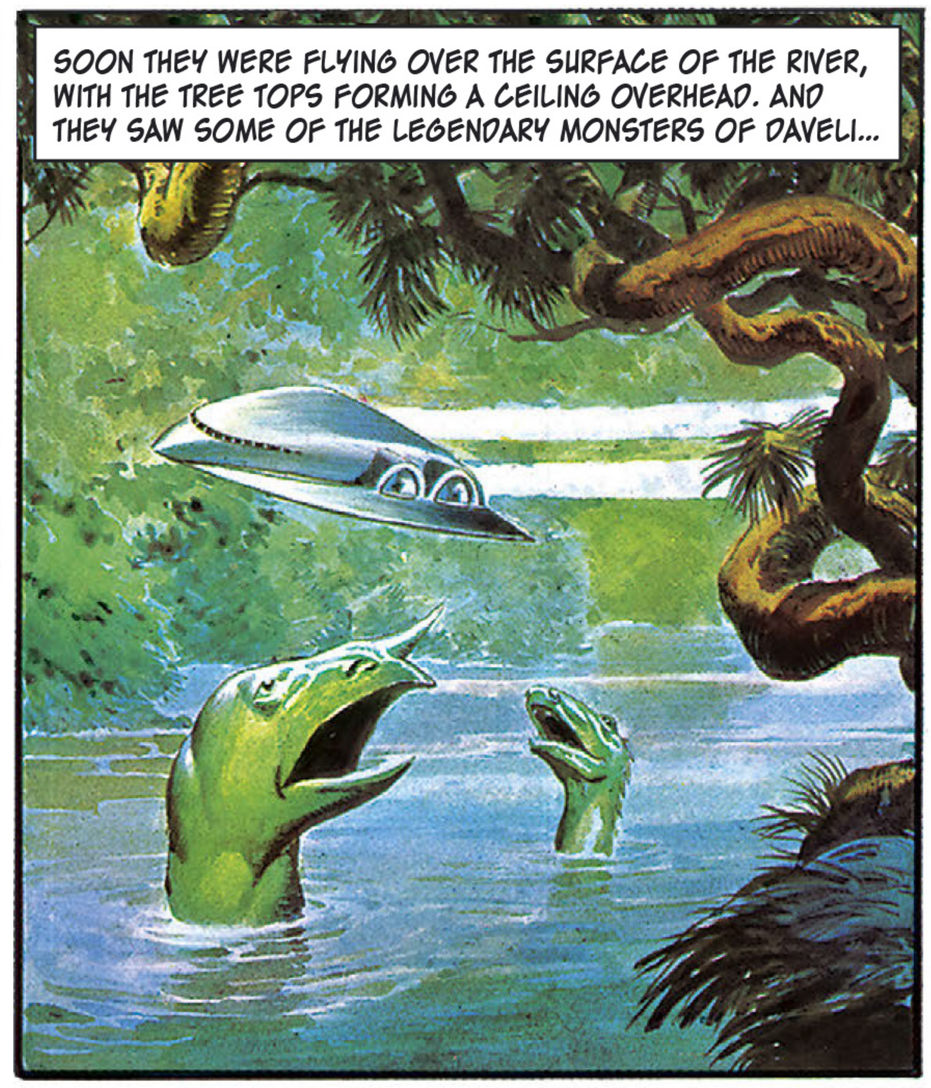

TRIGO'S FACE CLOUDED. HE WAS FOND OF HIS NEPHEW AND HE KNEW THAT THERE WAS LITTLE HOPE OF EVER SEEING THE BOY AGAIN.
IT'S HOPELESS TO SEND AN EXPEDITION TO FIND THEM. FLYING CRAFT COULD NEVER PENETRATE THOSE DENSE TREETOPS AND THERE ARE NO PATHS THROUGH THE THICK UNDERGROWTH. IS THAT NOT SO, PERIC?

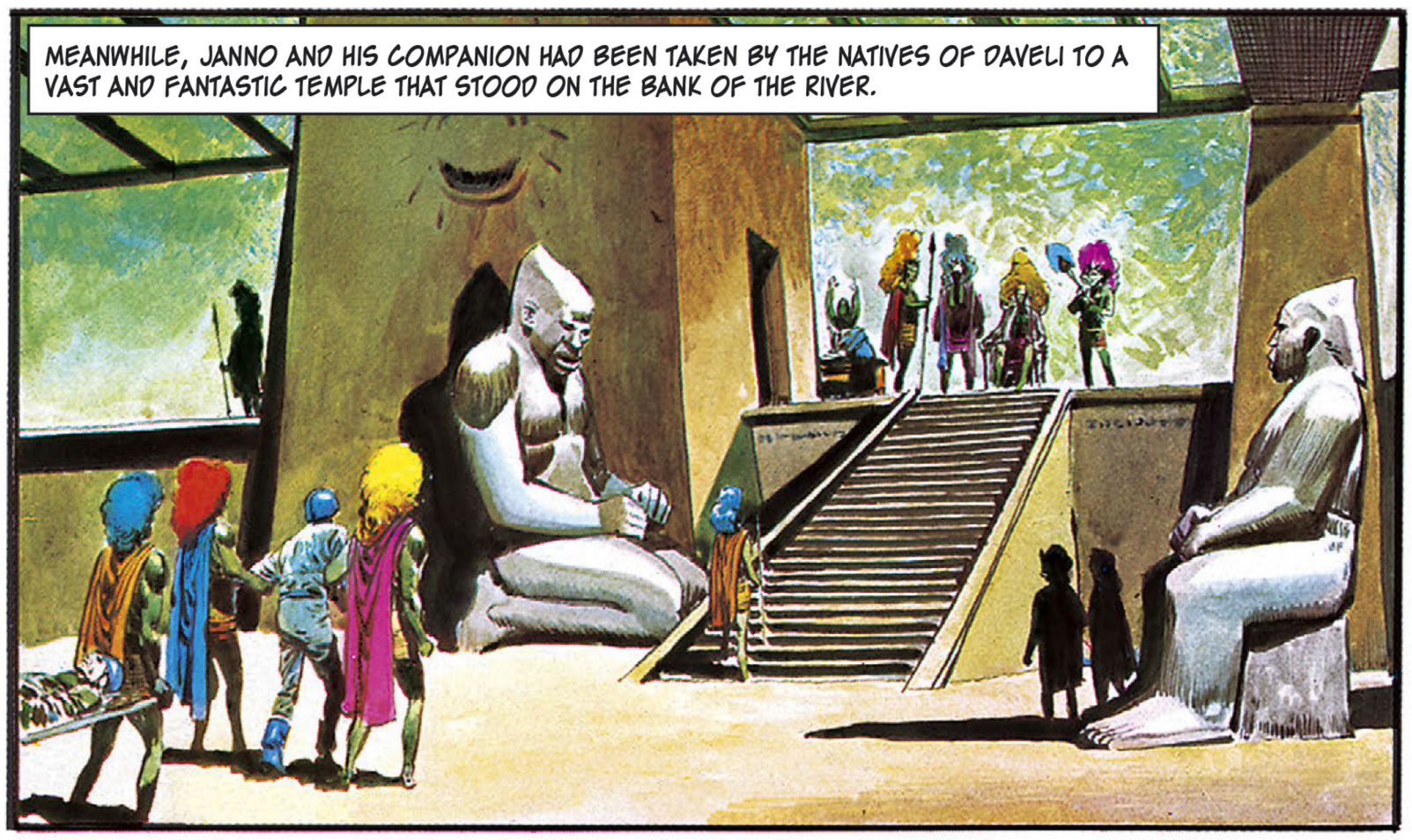
PERIC, THE WISE OLD MAN OF THARV, PONDERED DEEPLY. AND THEN...
MANY YEARS AGO, MY LORD, A PARTY OF MY PEOPLE, THE THARVS, EXPLORED THE EDGES OF THE DAVELI JUNGLE. THEY REPORTED THAT A BROAD RIVER FLOWS INTO THE INTERIOR...

THE COURSE OF THIS RIVER CANNOT BE SEEN FROM THE AIR BECAUSE IT IS ENTIRELY OVERHUNG BY THE DENSE TREETOPS... BUT IT MAY WELL GO STRAIGHT TO THE HEART OF THE JUNGLE.

A DARING PLAN FORMED IN TRIGO'S QUICKSILVER MIND.
BY THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON, WE WILL FLY UP THAT RIVER IN ONE OF THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT! GIVE ORDERS TO A CREW, BRAG... WE LEAVE AT ONCE!

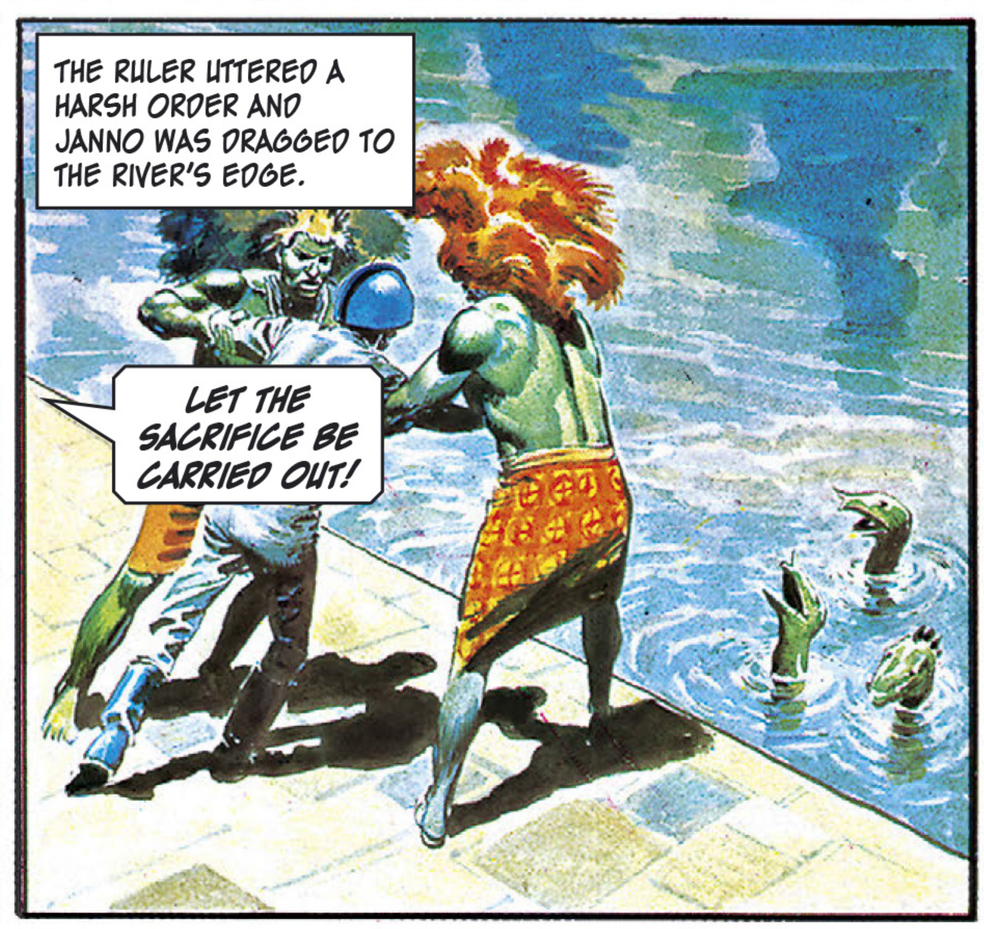

SOME HOURS LATER, WITH TRIGO, BRAG AND PERIC ABOARD, A LONE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT FLEW LOW TOWARDS THE FORBIDDING JUNGLE OF DAVELI.
SEE, MY LORD, THE RIVER ENTERS THE JUNGLE THROUGH A TUNNEL IN THE TREES AND UNDERGROWTH.
YOUR THARV EXPLORERS SPOKE THE TRUTH, PERIC. HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THE ENTRANCE, PILOT!


SOON THEY WERE FLYING OVER THE SURFACE OF THE RIVER, WITH THE TREE TOPS FORMING A CEILING OVERHEAD. AND THEY SAW SOME OF THE LEGENDARY MONSTERS OF DAVELI...

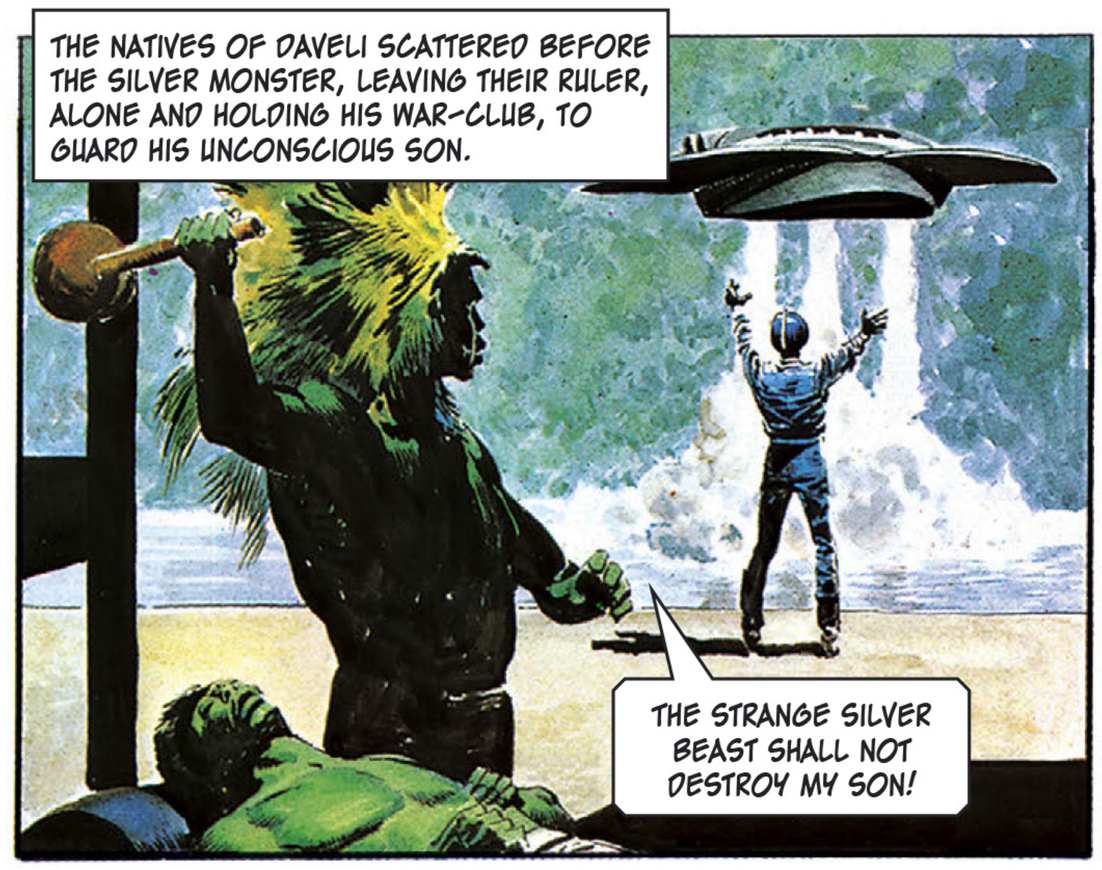

MEANWHILE, JANNO AND HIS COMPANION HAD BEEN TAKEN BY THE NATIVES OF DAVELI TO A VAST AND FANTASTIC TEMPLE THAT STOOD ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER.

JANNO WAS BROUGHT FACE-TO-FACE WITH A FORBIDDING FIGURE, WHO ADDRESSED HIM IN THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON.
THE RIVER GODS HAVE ANSWERED THE PRAYERS OF MY PEOPLE. THEY HAVE SENT YOU TO DIE IN THE PLACE OF MY SON!

THE RULER POINTED TO WHERE A YOUNG BOY LAY UPON AN ALTAR, SURROUNDED BY WEEPING WOMEN.
YOU SHALL BE SACRIFICED TO THE CREATURES OF THE RIVER... AND MY SON SHALL LIVE!


THE RULER UTTERED A HARSH ORDER AND JANNO WAS DRAGGED TO THE RIVER'S EDGE.
LET THE SACRIFICE BE CARRIED OUT!

SUDDENLY, THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH A ROARING SOUND AND A GLEAMING SILVER SHAPE HURTLED OVER THE SURFACE OF THE RIVER TO WHERE JANNO STOOD. HIS CAPTORS TURNED AND FLED WITH SUPERSTITIOUS TERROR.


THE NATIVES OF DAVELI SCATTERED BEFORE THE SILVER MONSTER, LEAVING THEIR RULER, ALONE AND HOLDING HIS WAR-CLUB, TO GUARD HIS UNCONSCIOUS SON.
THE STRANGE SILVER BEAST SHALL NOT DESTROY MY SON!

IT WAS AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WHICH HAD COME TO SEARCH FOR THE LOST CREW. GREAT WAS JANNO'S JOY TO SEE HIS FATHER BRAG AND HIS UNCLE TRIGO DESCEND.
THANK THE STARS YOU CAME. IN THE SPACE OF ANOTHER FIVE BREATHS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO LATE FOR ME.
GLAD TO SEE YOU ALIVE AND WELL, JANNO!

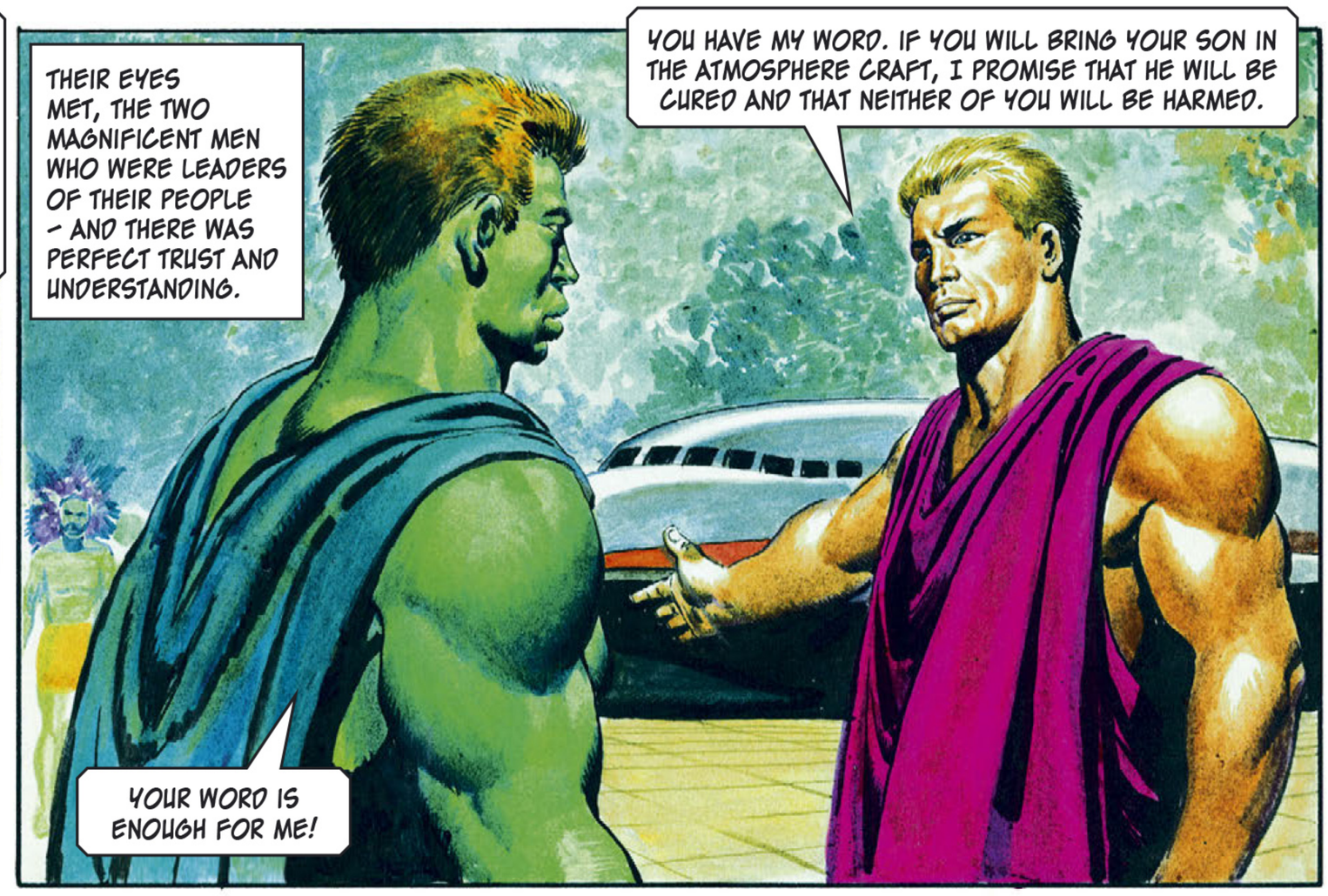
THEN THEY TURNED TO SEE A FEARSOME FIGURE CHARGING STRAIGHT AT THEM WITH WAR-CLUB UPRAISED.
AYEEEEEEE!

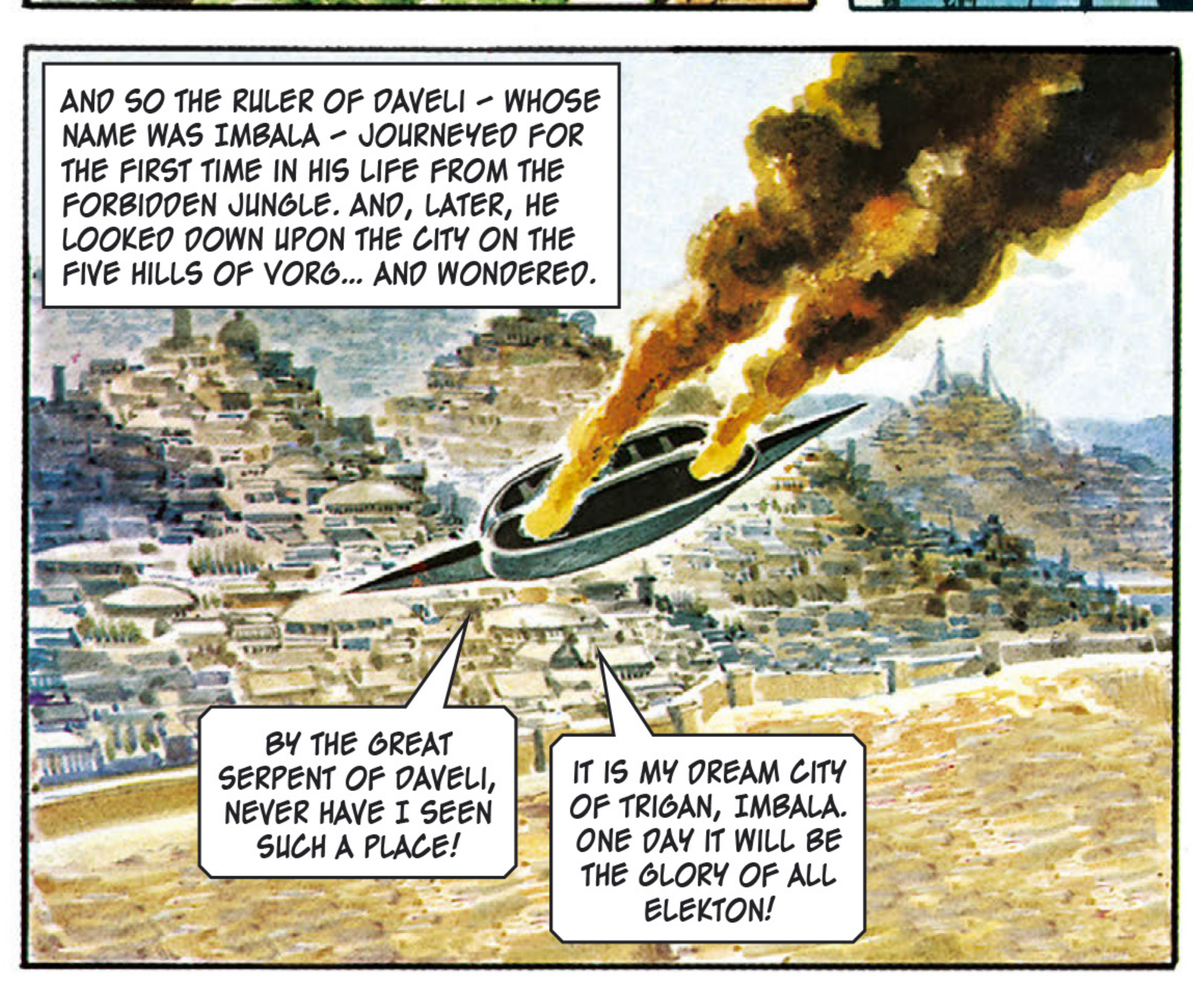
TRIGO GRAPPLED WITH THE ATTACKER. HIS POWERFUL HANDS CHECKED THE DOWN-SWINGING CLUB.

THEN BEGAN A DUEL OF SUPERMEN AS THE LEADERS OF VORG AND DAVELI STROVE WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT TO DEFEAT THE OTHER.

IN THE END, IT WAS TRIGO WHO TRIUMPHED AND THE RULER OF DAVELI BOWED HIS PROUD HEAD IN SUBMISSION.
NEVER HAVE I FOUGHT WITH SUCH A MIGHTY WARRIOR. TAKE MY LIFE BUT SPARE MY SON, FOR HE HAS NOT LONG TO LIVE.

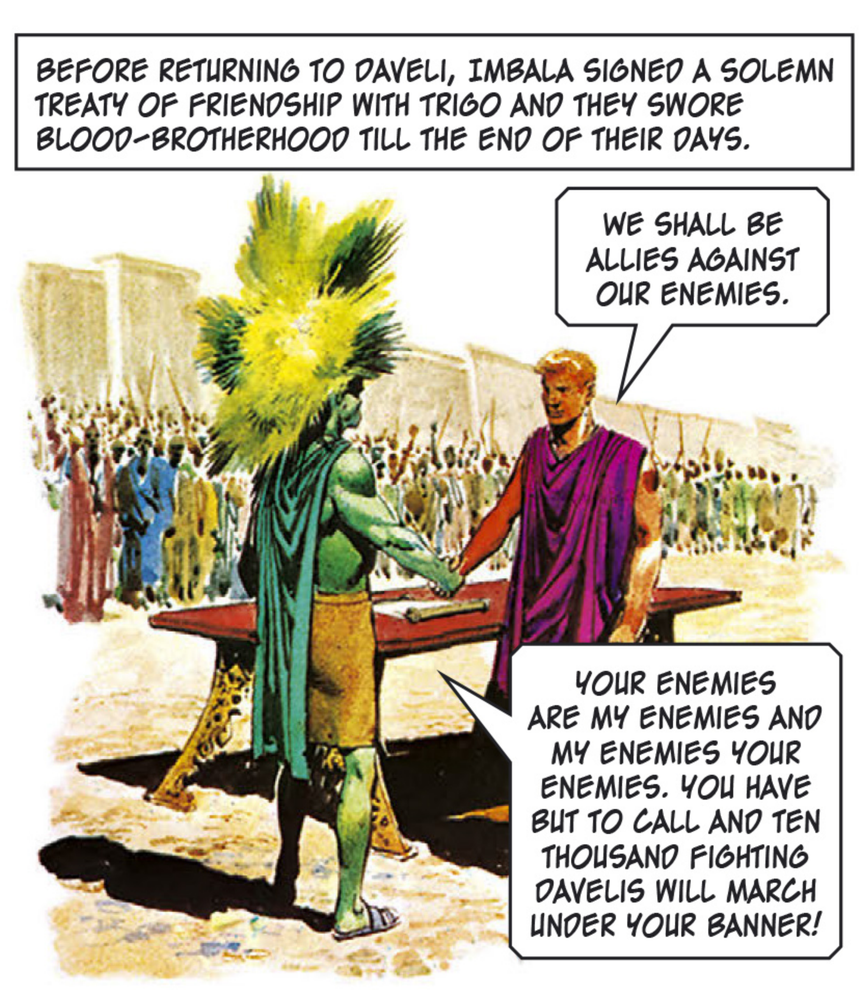
PERIC, THE WISE OLD MAN OF THARV, HAD BEEN EXAMINING THE UNCONSCIOUS BOY. TURNING, HE CALLED OUT TO TRIGO.
MY LORD, THIS YOUTH NEEDS MEDICAL ATTENTION. IF HE COULD BE TAKEN TO MY DAUGHTER, SALVIA, SHE COULD SAVE HIM WITH HER ARTS.
WHAT? IS THIS TRUE?


THEIR EYES MET, THE TWO MAGNIFICENT MEN WHO WERE LEADERS OF THEIR PEOPLE – AND THERE WAS PERFECT TRUST AND UNDERSTANDING.
YOU HAVE MY WORD. IF YOU WILL BRING YOUR SON IN THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, I PROMISE THAT HE WILL BE CURED AND THAT NEITHER OF YOU WILL BE HARMED.
YOUR WORD IS ENOUGH FOR ME!


AND SO THE RULER OF DAVELI – WHOSE NAME WAS IMBALA – JOURNEYED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE FROM THE FORBIDDEN JUNGLE. AND, LATER, HE LOOKED DOWN UPON THE CITY ON THE FIVE HILLS OF VORG... AND WONDERED.
BY THE GREAT SERPENT OF DAVELI, NEVER HAVE I SEEN SUCH A PLACE!
IT IS MY DREAM CITY OF TRIGAN, IMBALA. ONE DAY IT WILL BE THE GLORY OF ALL ELEKTON!

THAT NIGHT, THE GIRL SALVIA PERFORMED A SKILFUL OPERATION UPON IMBALA'S SON WHILE THE TWO LEADERS LOOKED ON.
MY BOY!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE, IMBALA! LEAVE THE GIRL TO DO HER HEALING WORK!

IT WAS THE FIRST LIGHT OF DAWN BEFORE THE BOY'S EYES OPENED... AND HE SMILED WEAKLY AT HIS FATHER.
TRULY THE GODS HAVE SMILED UPON THE PEOPLE OF DAVELI.
I... I LIVE!


BEFORE RETURNING TO DAVELI, IMBALA SIGNED A SOLEMN TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH TRIGO AND THEY SWORE BLOOD-BROTHERHOOD TILL THE END OF THEIR DAYS.
WE SHALL BE ALLIES AGAINST OUR ENEMIES.
YOUR ENEMIES ARE MY ENEMIES AND MY ENEMIES YOUR ENEMIES. YOU HAVE BUT TO CALL AND TEN THOUSAND FIGHTING DAVELIS WILL MARCH UNDER YOUR BANNER!

AND A GREAT FRIENDSHIP WAS FORGED BETWEEN IMBALA'S SON, KEREN, AND YOUNG JANNO. THE VETERAN PILOT, ZUFIO – NONE THE WORSE FOR HIS CRASH – MADE THEM A PROMISE.
I CAN SEE THAT I HAVE TWO PUPILS ON MY HANDS NOW AND I WILL MAKE PILOTS AND NAVIGATORS OF THE PAIR OF YOU IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO.
TO FLY AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT! THAT WILL BE WONDERFUL!

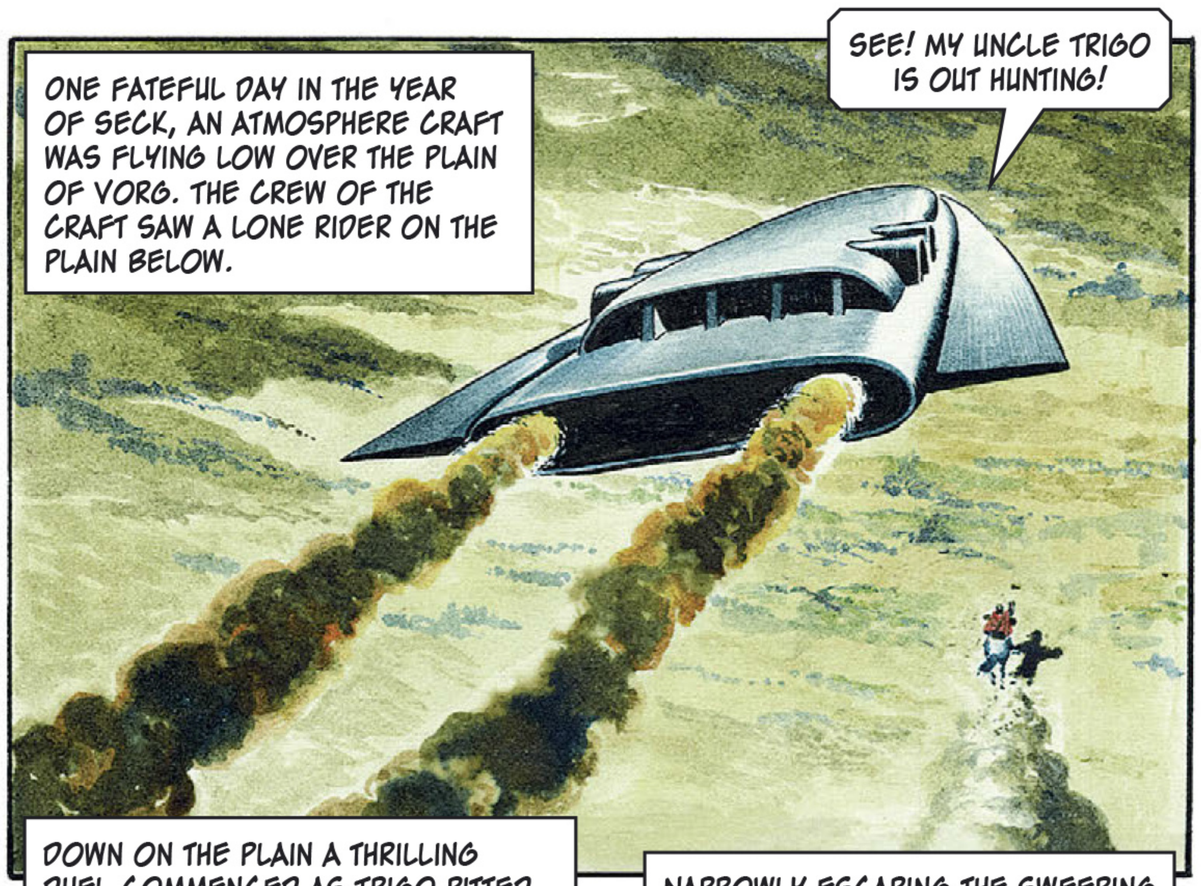
III

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE FALLING MOON

Originally published in ***Ranger***

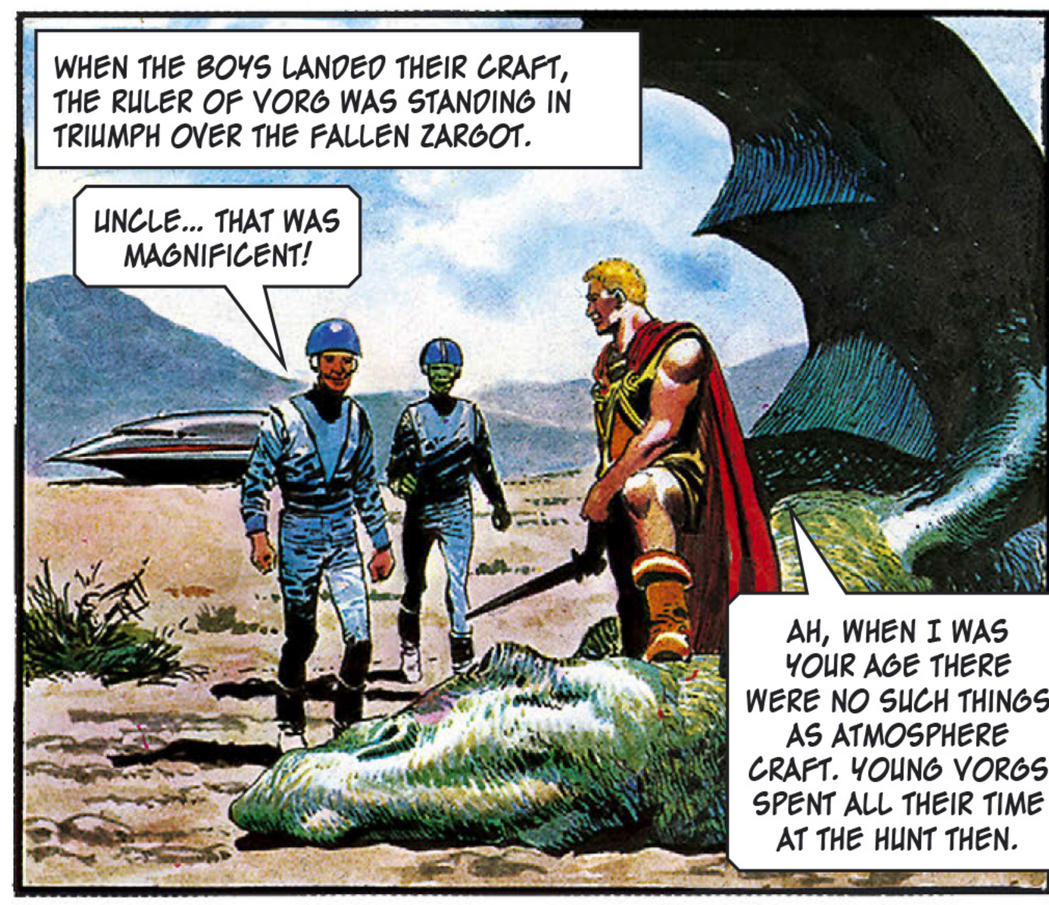
26th February 1966 – 28th May 1966

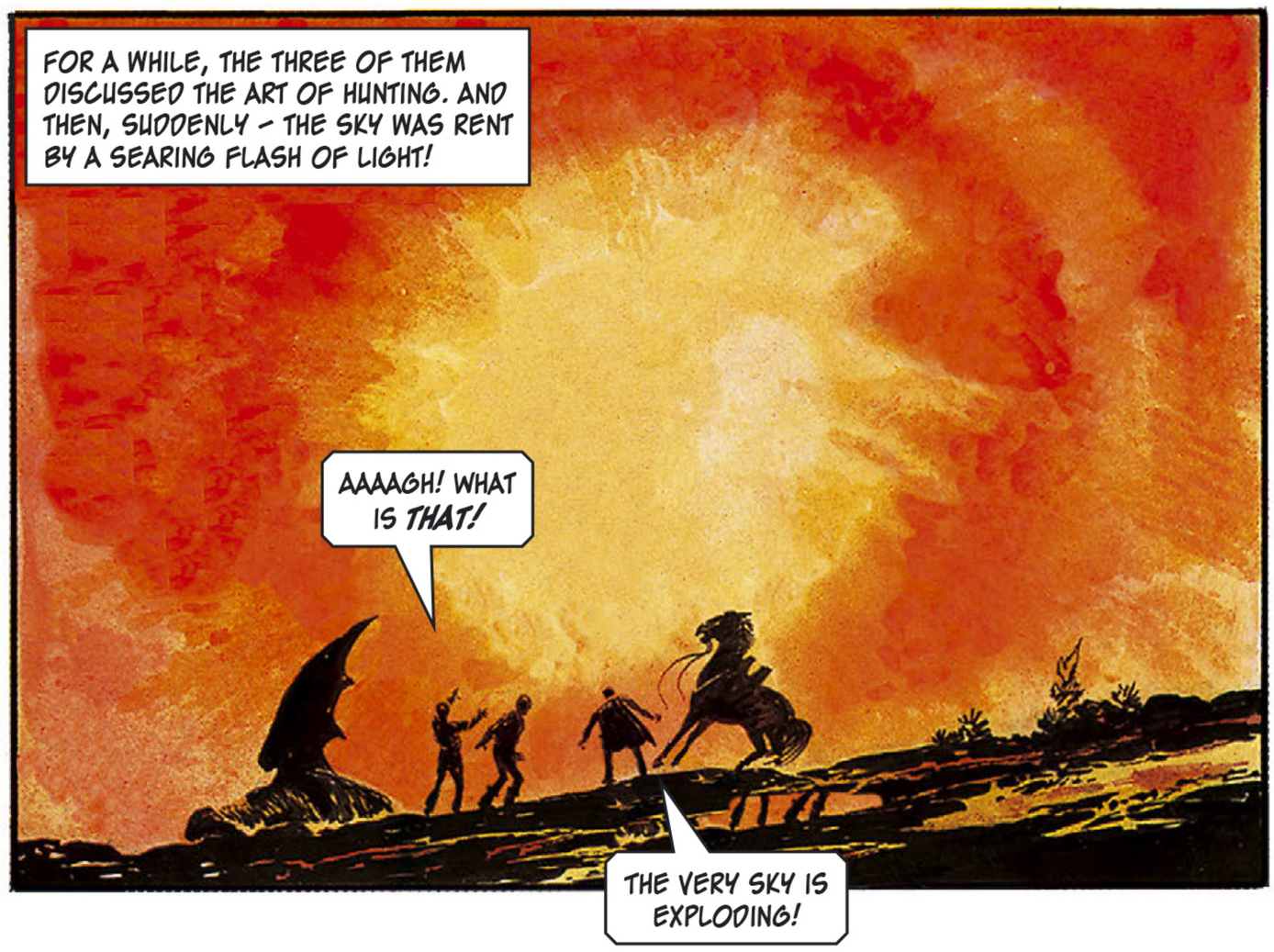

ONE FATEFUL DAY IN THE YEAR OF SECK, AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WAS FLYING LOW OVER THE PLAIN OF VORG. THE CREW OF THE CRAFT SAW A LONE RIDER ON THE PLAIN BELOW.
SEE! MY UNCLE TRIGO IS OUT HUNTING!

IN THE CRAFT WERE TRIGO'S NEPHEW JANNO AND HIS FRIEND KEREN.
LOOK! A WILD ZARGOT IS BREAKING COVER! NOW WE SHALL SEE HOW A REAL VORG HUNTSMAN MAKES A KILL!

DOWN ON THE PLAIN A THRILLING DUEL COMMENCED AS TRIGO PITTED HIS SKILL AND COURAGE AGAINST THE MOST SAVAGE CREATURE ON THE PLANET ELEKTON.

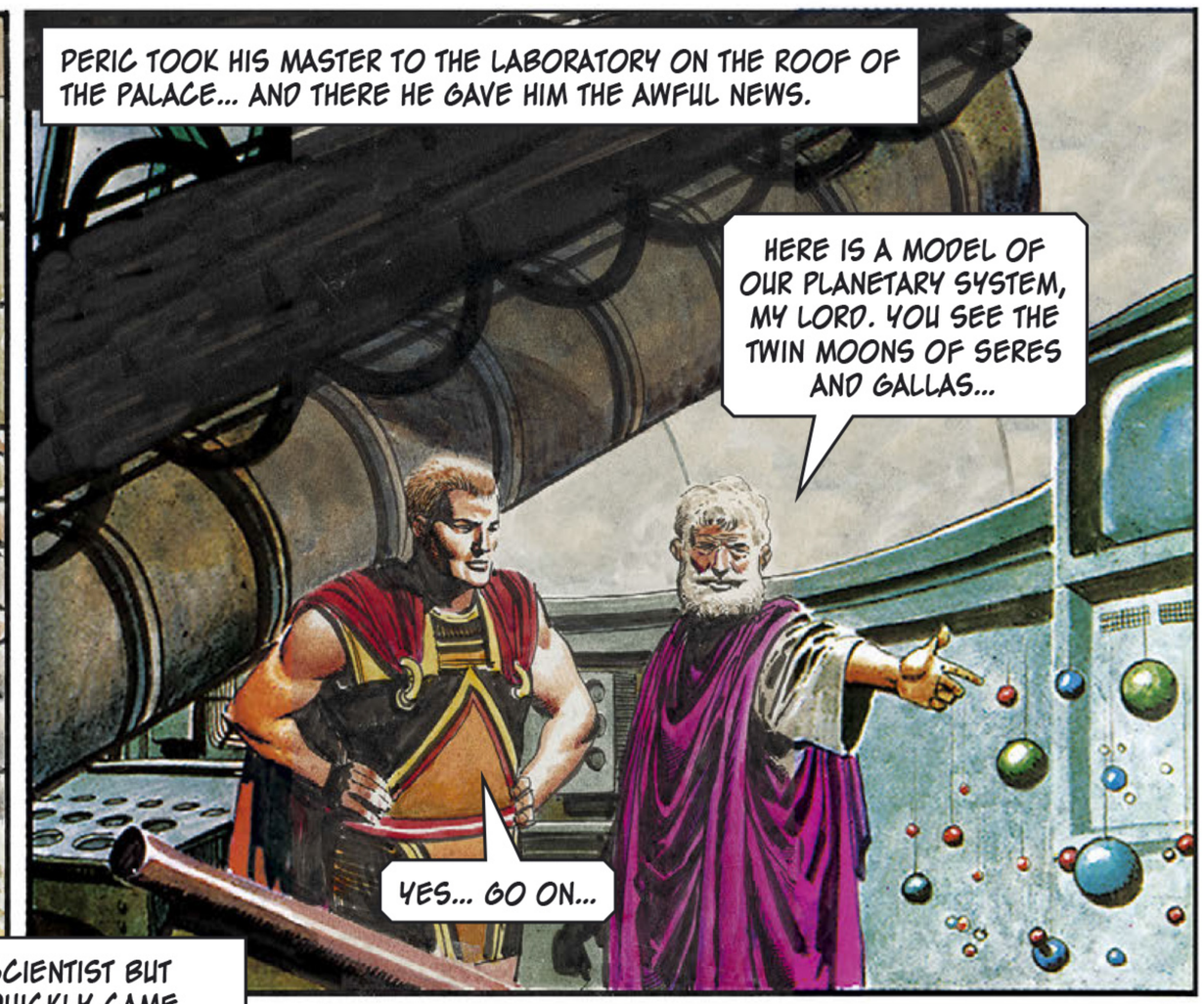
NARROWLY ESCAPING THE SWEEPING TALONS OF THE GIANT BEAST, TRIGO DROVE HIS SPEAR FORWARD.

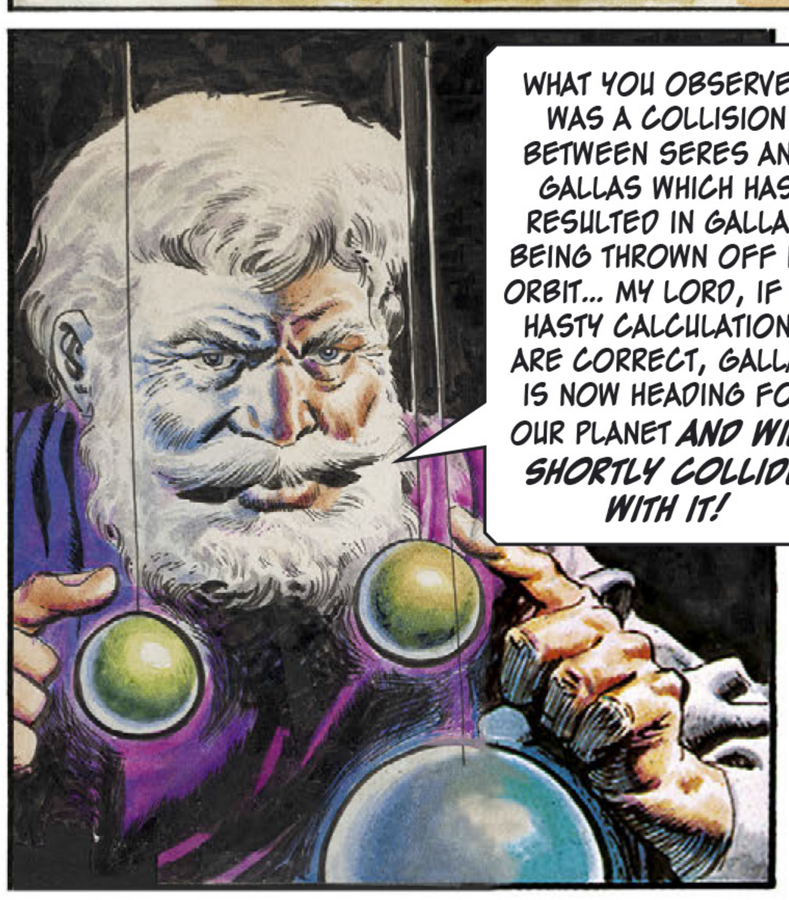

WHEN THE BOYS LANDED THEIR CRAFT, THE RULER OF VORG WAS STANDING IN TRIUMPH OVER THE FALLEN ZARGOT.
UNCLE... THAT WAS MAGNIFICENT!
AH, WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE THERE WERE NO SUCH THINGS AS ATMOSPHERE CRAFT. YOUNG VORGS SPENT ALL THEIR TIME AT THE HUNT THEN.


FOR A WHILE, THE THREE OF THEM DISCUSSED THE ART OF HUNTING. AND THEN, SUDDENLY – THE SKY WAS RENT BY A SEARING FLASH OF LIGHT!
AAAAGH! WHAT IS *THAT!*
THE VERY SKY IS EXPLODING!

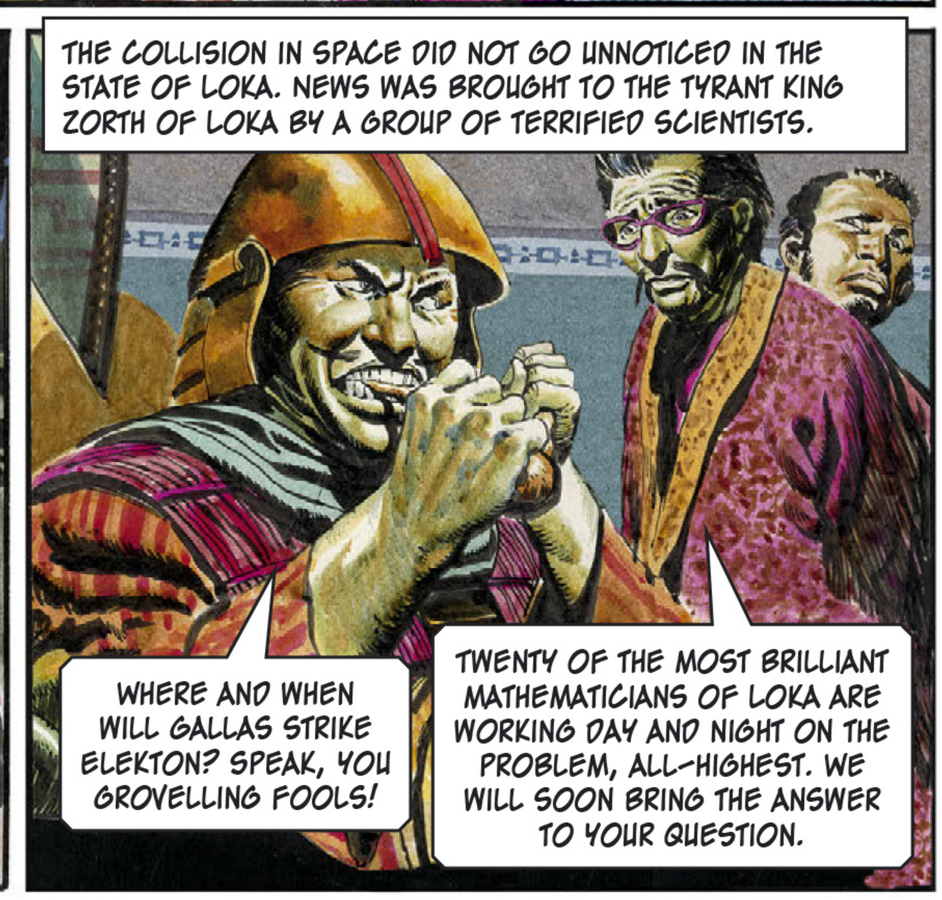
AFTER A WHILE, THE DISTURBANCE CEASED AND TRIGO SWUNG HIMSELF ASTRIDE HIS KREED.
SHALL WE FLY UP THERE AND SEE IF WE CAN DISCOVER THE CAUSE, UNCLE?
NO! RETURN AT ONCE TO TRIGAN, BOYS.

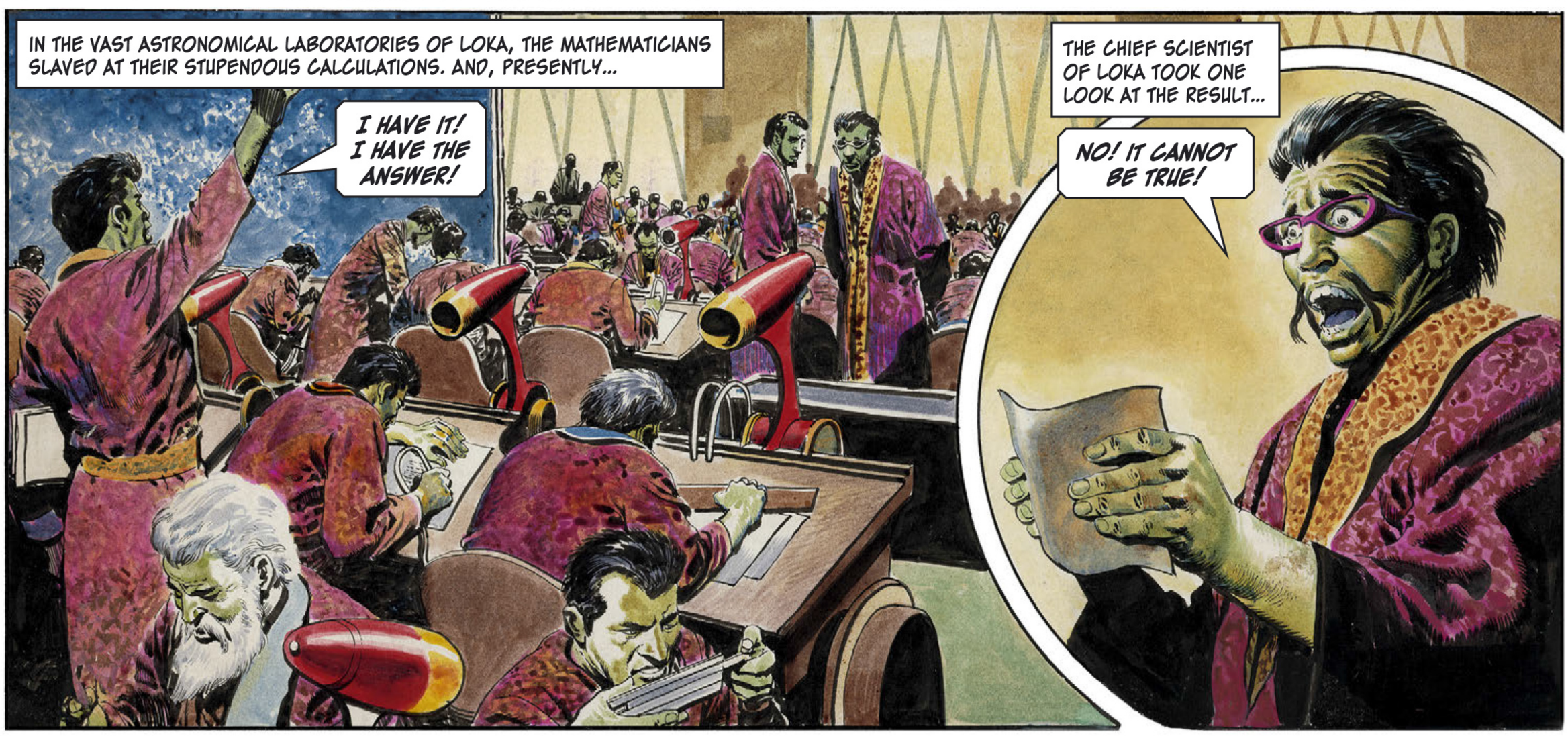
RIDING HARD, TRIGO REACHED THE CITY WITHIN THE HOUR, TO BE GREETED AT THE GATES BY THE WISE OLD PERIC.
MY LORD! YOU MUST HAVE SEEN THE DISTURBANCE IN THE SKY. A TERRIBLE THING HAS HAPPENED!
TELL ME, PERIC.

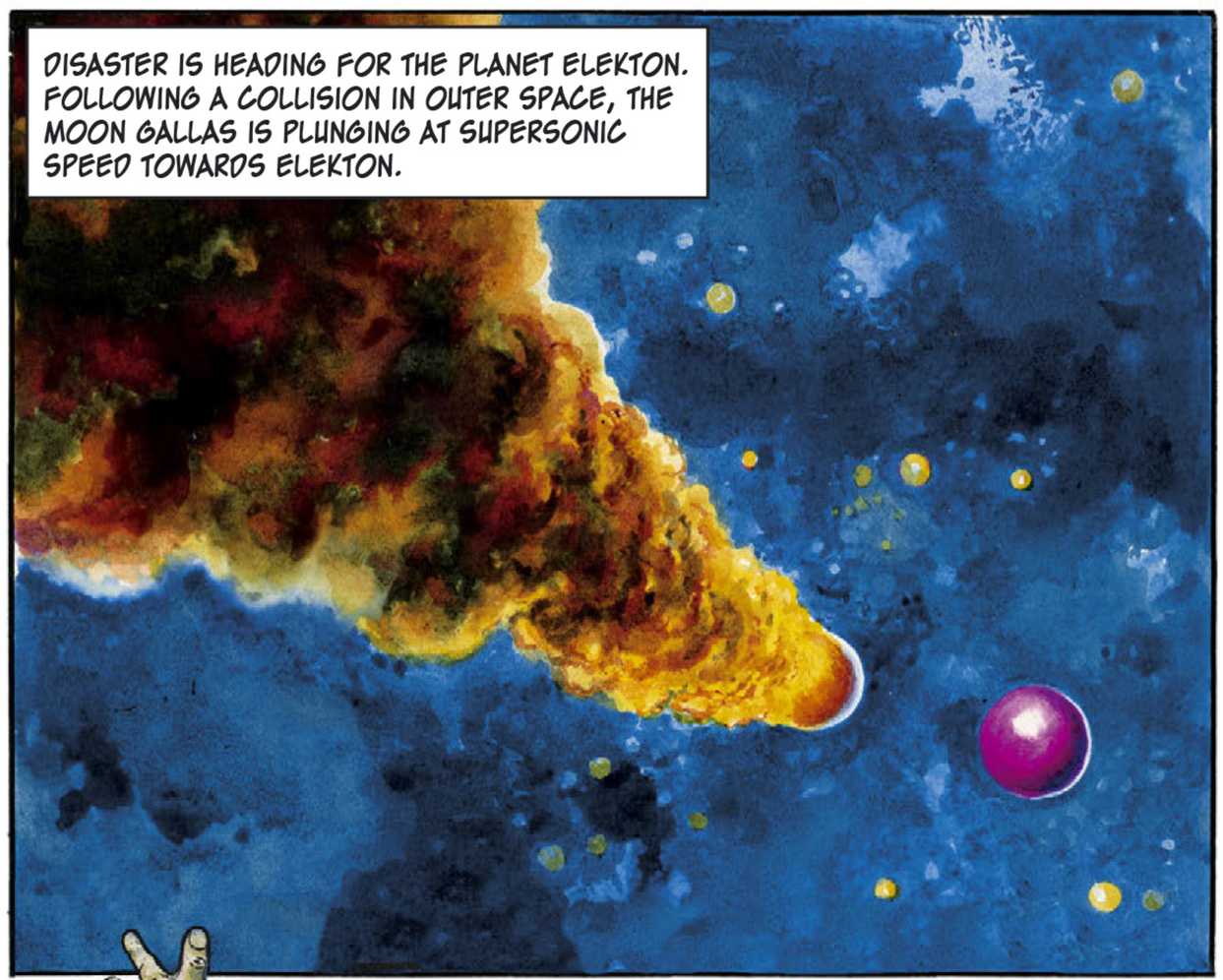

PERIC TOOK HIS MASTER TO THE LABORATORY ON THE ROOF OF THE PALACE... AND THERE HE GAVE HIM THE AWFUL NEWS.
HERE IS A MODEL OF OUR PLANETARY SYSTEM, MY LORD. YOU SEE THE TWIN MOONS OF SERES AND GALLAS...
YES... GO ON...


WHAT YOU OBSERVED WAS A COLLISION BETWEEN SERES AND GALLAS WHICH HAS RESULTED IN GALLAS BEING THROWN OFF ITS ORBIT... MY LORD, IF MY HASTY CALCULATIONS ARE CORRECT, GALLAS IS NOW HEADING FOR OUR PLANET AND WILL SHORTLY COLLIDE WITH IT!

TRIGO WAS NO SCIENTIST BUT HIS KEEN MIND QUICKLY CAME TO GRIPS WITH THE HEART OF THE MATTER.
THERE IS NO QUESTION OF SUCH A SMALL MOON AS GALLAS DESTROYING ELEKTON BUT IT WILL CAUSE A GREAT DEVASTATION. EXACTLY WHERE WILL IT STRIKE ELEKTON, PERIC?
AH, MY LORD. THAT IS WHAT I MUST CALCULATE... AND IT WILL TAKE SOME LITTLE TIME!

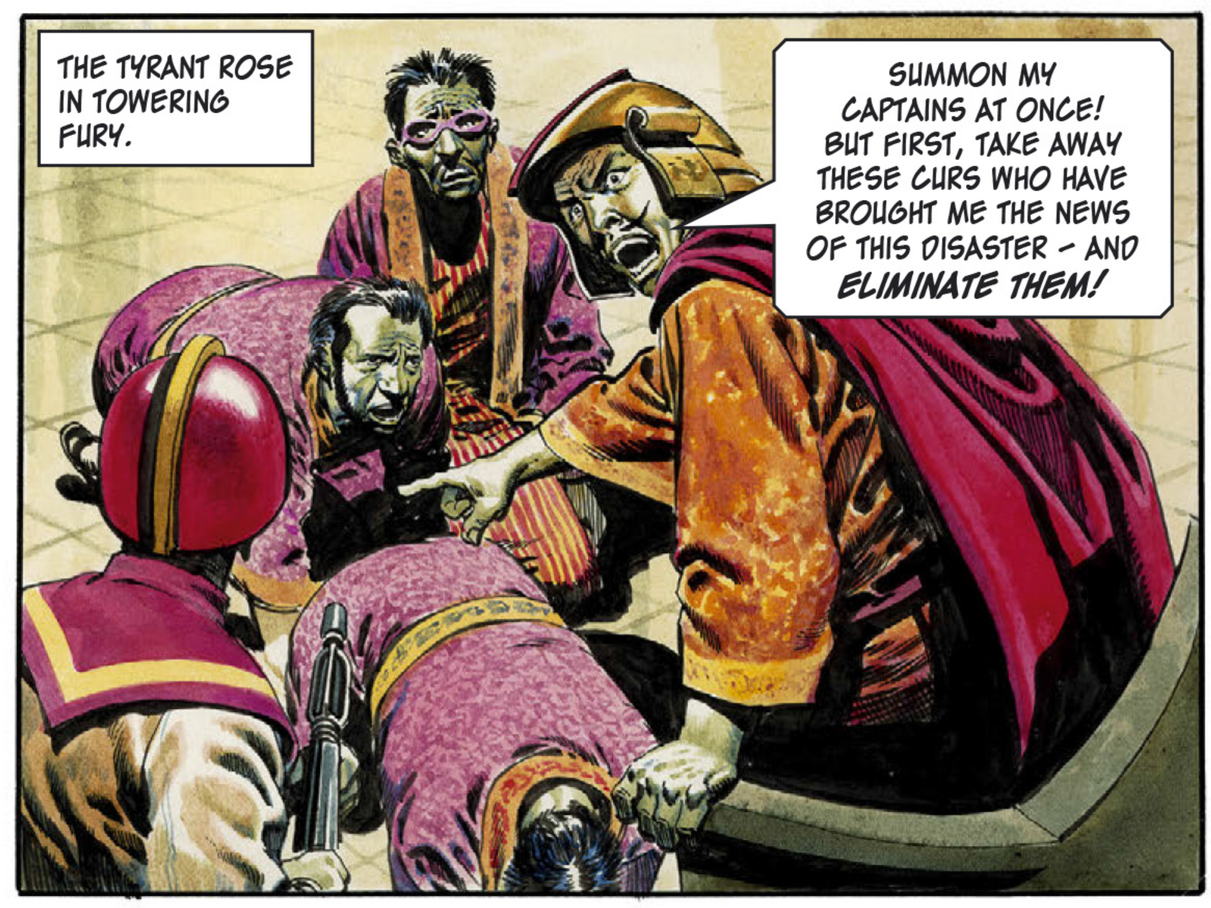

THE COLLISION IN SPACE DID NOT GO UNNOTICED IN THE STATE OF LOKA. NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO THE TYRANT KING ZORTH OF LOKA BY A GROUP OF TERRIFIED SCIENTISTS.
WHERE AND WHEN WILL GALLAS STRIKE ELEKTON? SPEAK, YOU GROVELLING FOOLS!
TWENTY OF THE MOST BRILLIANT MATHEMATICIANS OF LOKA ARE WORKING DAY AND NIGHT ON THE PROBLEM, ALL-HIGHEST. WE WILL SOON BRING THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION.

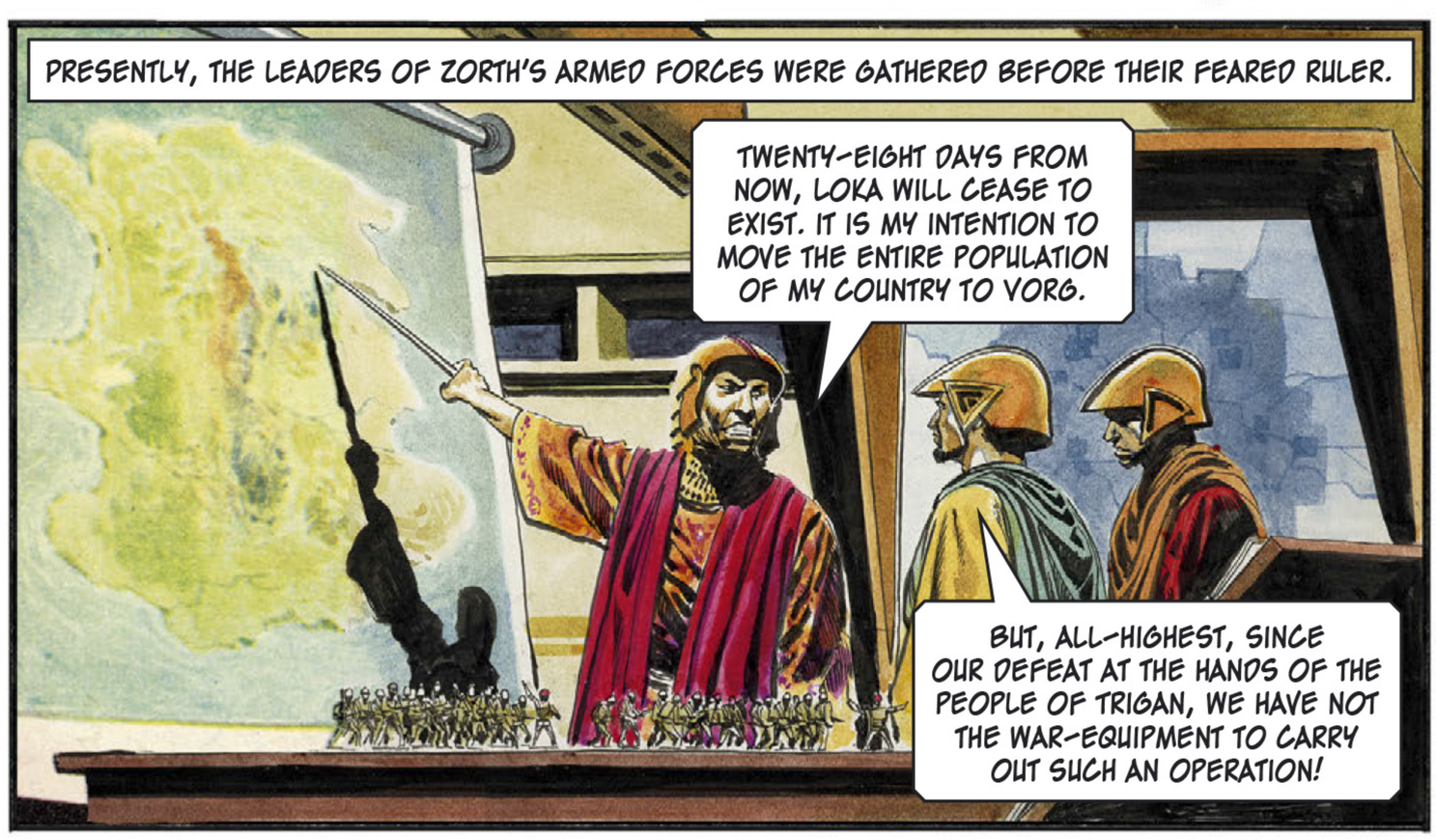

IN THE VAST ASTRONOMICAL LABORATORIES OF LOKA, THE MATHEMATICIANS SLAVED AT THEIR STUPENDOUS CALCULATIONS. AND, PRESENTLY...
I HAVE IT! I HAVE THE ANSWER!
THE CHIEF SCIENTIST OF LOKA TOOK ONE LOOK AT THE RESULT...
NO! IT CANNOT BE TRUE!


DISASTER IS HEADING FOR THE PLANET ELEKTON. FOLLOWING A COLLISION IN OUTER SPACE, THE MOON GALLAS IS PLUNGING AT SUPERSONIC SPEED TOWARDS ELEKTON.

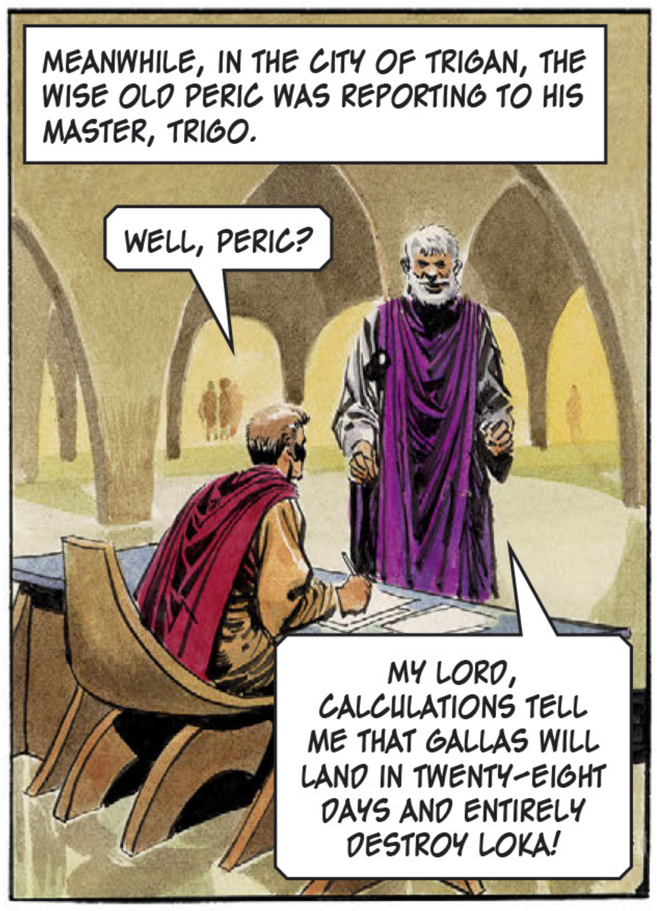
IN THE PALACE OF ZORTH, THE TYRANT KING OF LOKA, TERRIFIED SCIENTISTS PROSTRATED THEMSELVES BEFORE THE THRONE.
WELL, YOU CRAVEN FOOLS, HAVE YOU DISCOVERED WHERE AND WHEN GALLAS WILL STRIKE ELEKTON? SPEAK, YOU DODDERING CURS!
ALL-HIGHEST... I TREMBLE TO TELL YOU...

THE SPOKESMAN STAMMERED OUT THE TERRIBLE NEWS.
GALLAS WILL COLLIDE AT THE SIXTH HOUR IN TWENTY-EIGHT DAYS TIME, ALL-HIGHEST. AND IT WILL LAND HERE... ON LOKA!
WHA-A-A-T? YOU DARE TELL ME THIS?

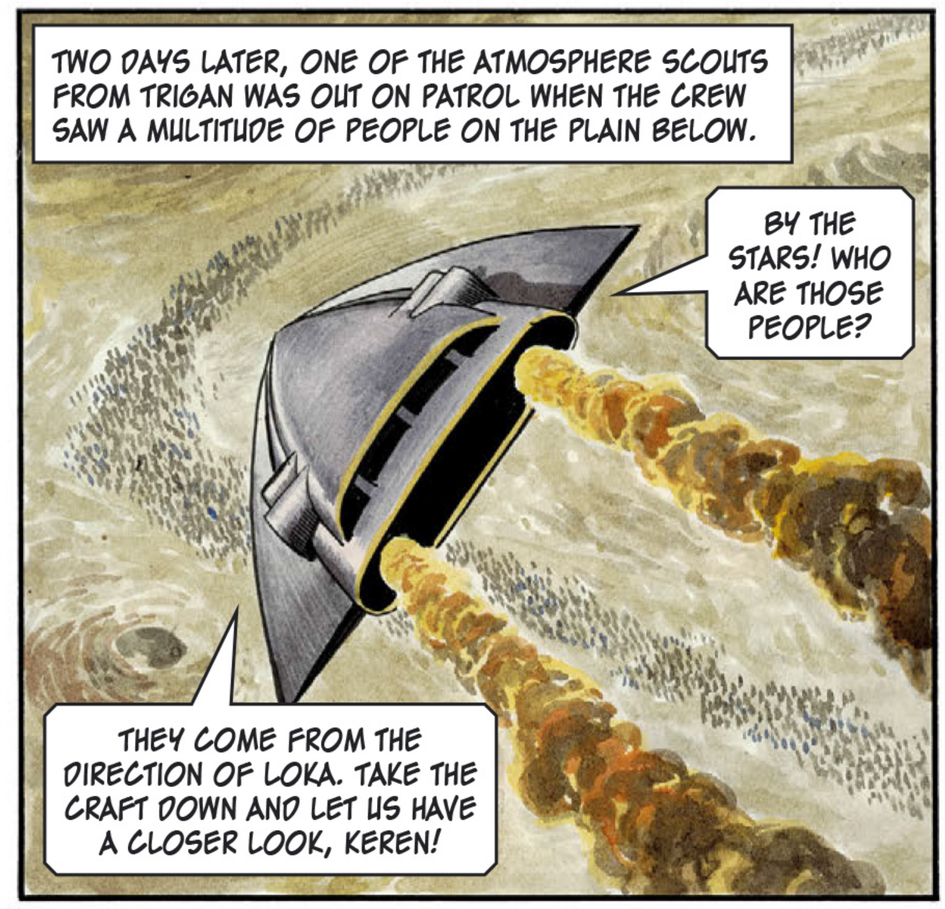

THE TYRANT ROSE IN TOWERING FURY.
SUMMON MY CAPTAINS AT ONCE! BUT FIRST, TAKE AWAY THESE CURS WHO HAVE BROUGHT ME THE NEWS OF THIS DISASTER – AND ELIMINATE THEM!


PRESENTLY, THE LEADERS OF ZORTH'S ARMED FORCES WERE GATHERED BEFORE THEIR FEARED RULER.
TWENTY-EIGHT DAYS FROM NOW, LOKA WILL CEASE TO EXIST. IT IS MY INTENTION TO MOVE THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF MY COUNTRY TO VORG.
BUT, ALL-HIGHEST, SINCE OUR DEFEAT AT THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN, WE HAVE NOT THE WAR-EQUIPMENT TO CARRY OUT SUCH AN OPERATION!

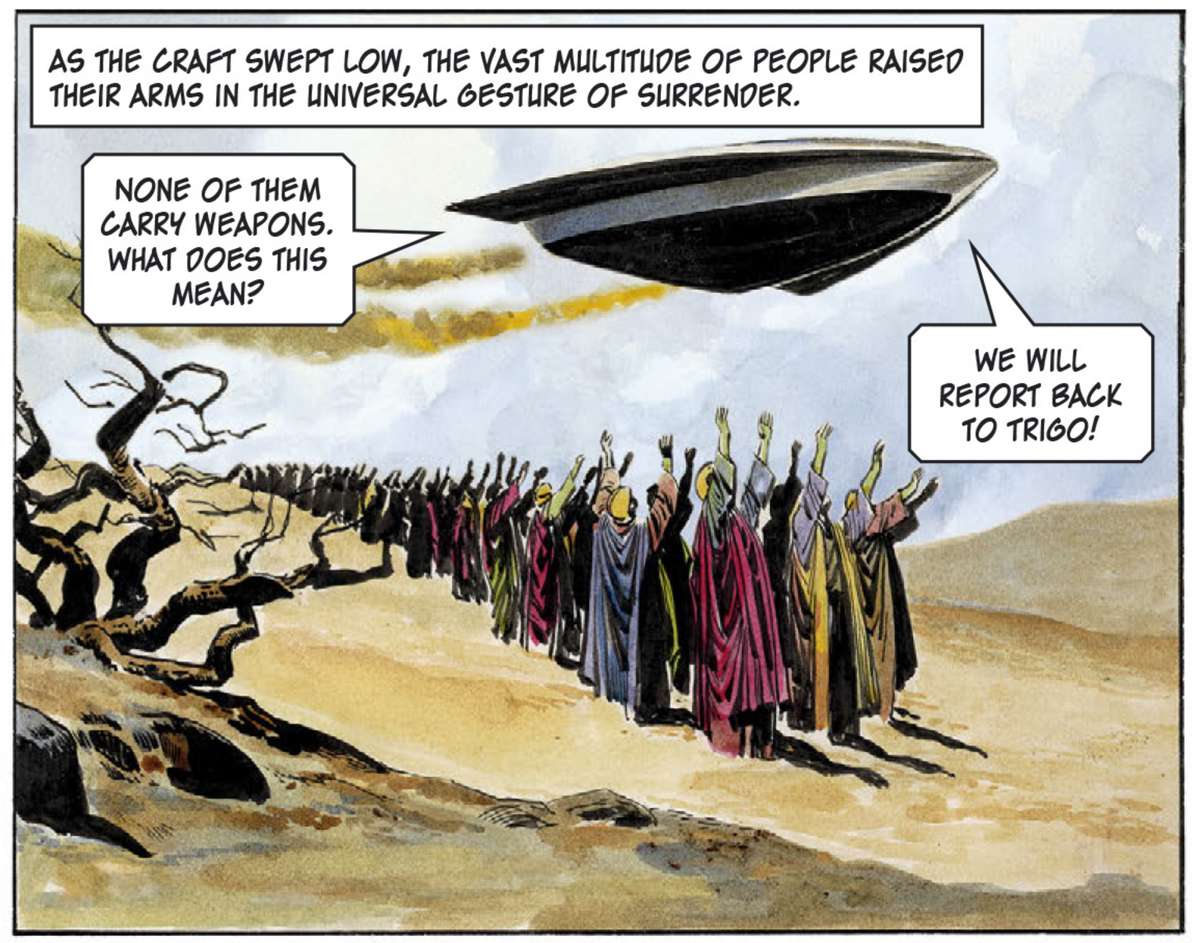
KING ZORTH LEERED CUNNINGLY AT HIS CHIEF CAPTAIN, YOTTU.
WE SHALL GO IN PEACE, YOTTU. AT LEAST... SO IT WILL SEEM...
AHA! SO YOU HAVE A PLAN, ALL-HIGHEST?


MEANWHILE, IN THE CITY OF TRIGAN, THE WISE OLD PERIC WAS REPORTING TO HIS MASTER, TRIGO.
WELL, PERIC?
MY LORD, CALCULATIONS TELL ME THAT GALLAS WILL LAND IN TWENTY-EIGHT DAYS AND ENTIRELY DESTROY LOKA!

TRIGO'S FINE EYES CLOUDED.
I HAVE NO LOVE FOR THE LOKANS AFTER WHAT THEY HAVE DONE TO OUR PEOPLE. BUT IT IS A TERRIBLE FATE THAT AWAITS THEM!


TWO DAYS LATER, ONE OF THE ATMOSPHERE SCOUTS FROM TRIGAN WAS OUT ON PATROL WHEN THE CREW SAW A MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE ON THE PLAIN BELOW.
BY THE STARS! WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE?
THEY COME FROM THE DIRECTION OF LOKA. TAKE THE CRAFT DOWN AND LET US HAVE A CLOSER LOOK, KEREN!

IN THE CRAFT WERE TRIGO'S NEPHEW JANNO AND HIS FRIEND KEREN.
THEY ARE LOKANS! HEADING FOR TRIGAN!
AND BY THEIR NUMBERS, THE ENTIRE LOKAN NATION!


AS THE CRAFT SWEPT LOW, THE VAST MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE RAISED THEIR ARMS IN THE UNIVERSAL GESTURE OF SURRENDER.
NONE OF THEM CARRY WEAPONS. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
WE WILL REPORT BACK TO TRIGO!

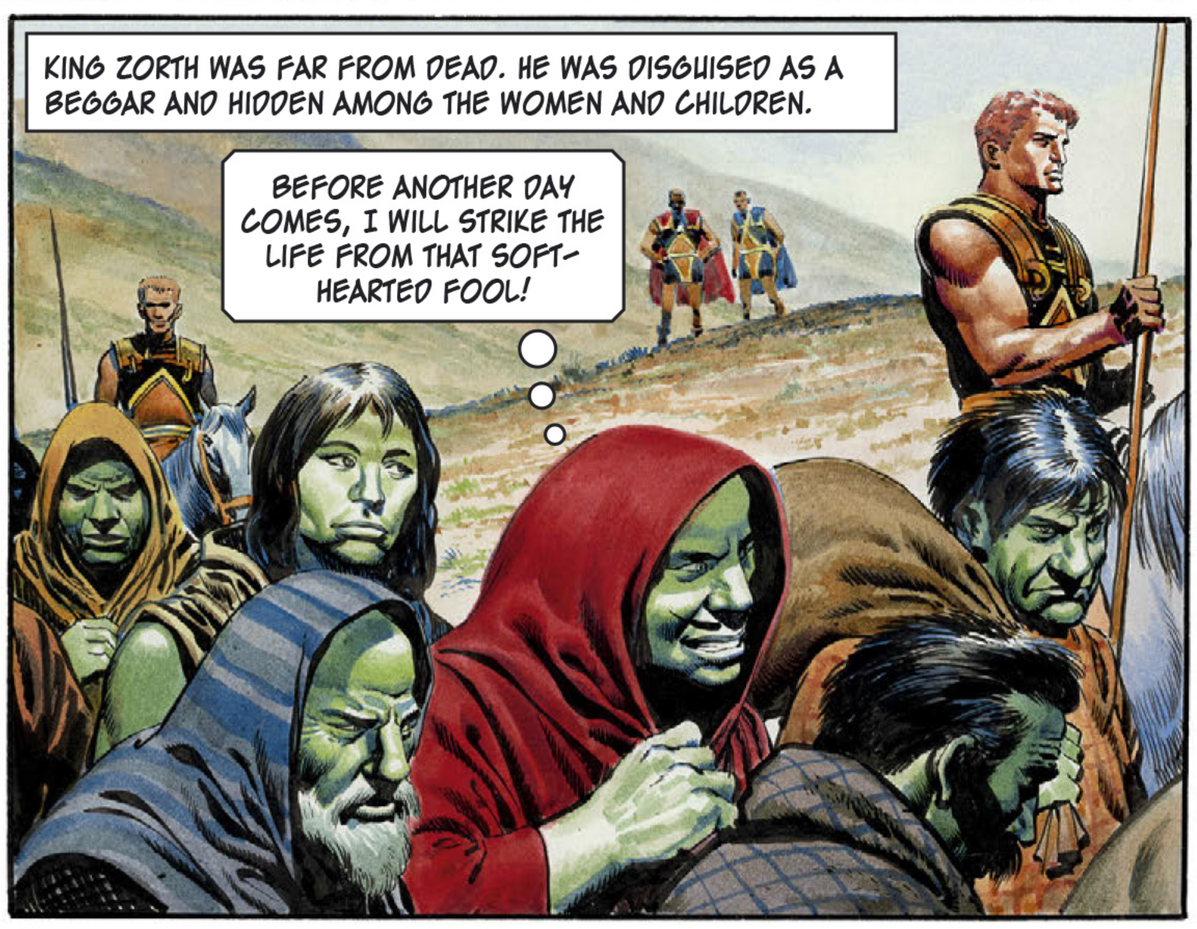
WITHIN THE HOUR, TRIGO HAD RIDDEN OUT TO MEET THE ONCOMING HORDE. HE CAME FACE TO FACE WITH YOTTU, WHO WAS AT THEIR HEAD.
LORD TRIGO, WE COME IN PEACE, BEGGING YOU TO ALLOW US SHELTER IN YOUR LAND!
I HAVE HEARD OF THE COMING DISASTER. BUT, AS TO ALLOWING YOU TO SHELTER HERE, I MUST DISCUSS THAT WITH YOUR KING.

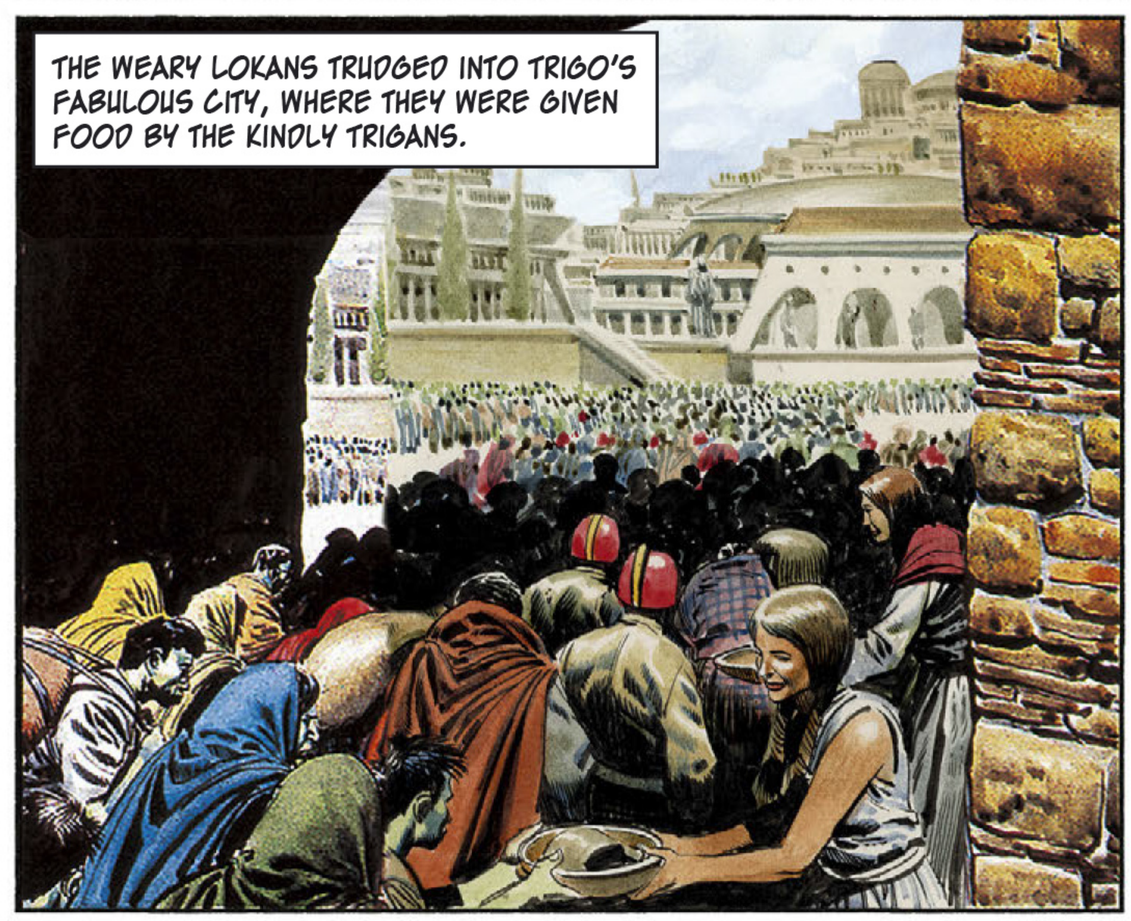
YOTTU SHOOK HIS HEAD GRIMLY.
THAT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE, MY LORD. TODAY, WE DEPOSED THE TYRANT WHO HAS LONG OPPRESSED LOKA AND ELIMINATED HIM. WE ARE A DIFFERENT PEOPLE NOW, MY LORD. YOU CAN TRUST US!
ZORTH... DEAD?

IN THE REAR RANKS OF THE MULTITUDE, A MAN WATCHED AND LISTENED AND HIS HAND CLOSED OVER THE HILT OF A WEAPON HIDDEN UNDER HIS RAGS.
WILL THAT SOFT-HEARTED FOOL TRIGO FALL FOR MY RUSE AND ALLOW US INTO HIS COUNTRY?
IT WAS KING ZORTH... AND HE WAS VERY MUCH ALIVE!

FOR A LONG TIME TRIGO PONDERED AND, AT LENGTH, MADE HIS DECISION.
VERY WELL! THE PAST IS DEAD. THE PEOPLE OF LOKA MAY SHELTER IN THE LAND OF THE TRIGANS!
YOU ARE AS MERCIFUL AS YOU ARE MIGHTY, LORD TRIGO!

THE MULTITUDE OF THE LOKANS WENT ON THEIR WAY. TRIGO'S BROTHER BRAG WATCHED THEM – AND GROWLED SAVAGELY.
YOU ARE A FOOL, BROTHER! THE ONLY GOOD LOKANS ARE DEAD LOKANS. YOU WILL LIVE TO REGRET THAT YOU HAVE OVERLOOKED THIS FACT!
THEY ARE A CHANGED PEOPLE, BRAG. DO NOT FORGET THAT THEY HAVE ELIMINATED THEIR TYRANT KING ZORTH.


KING ZORTH WAS FAR FROM DEAD. HE WAS DISGUISED AS A BEGGAR AND HIDDEN AMONG THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN.
BEFORE ANOTHER DAY COMES, I WILL STRIKE THE LIFE FROM THAT SOFT-HEARTED FOOL!


THE WEARY LOKANS TRUDGED INTO TRIGO'S FABULOUS CITY, WHERE THEY WERE GIVEN FOOD BY THE KINDLY TRIGANS.

THE LOKANS TOOK THE FOOD...
EAT, MY SON! IT WILL GIVE YOU STRENGTH TO TAKE PART IN THE KILLING!

LATER, THE DISGUISED KING ZORTH SIDLED UP TO HIS CAPTAIN.
THE KILLING BEGINS AT MIDNIGHT!
AT MIDNIGHT, ALL-HIGHEST!

AT MIDNIGHT, THE BORED SENTRY AT THE GATES OF TRIGO'S PALACE WAS THINKING LONGINGLY OF HIS BED...

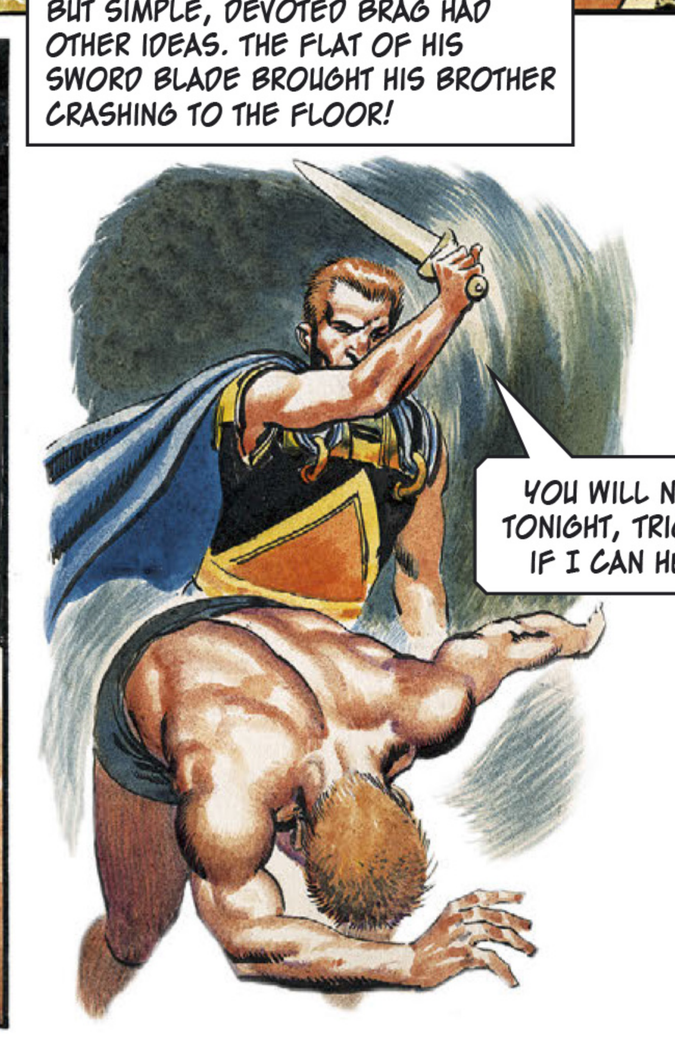
THE FELLING OF THE SENTRY WAS THE SIGNAL FOR AN ASSAULT UPON THE PALACE. THE LOKANS PRODUCED THEIR HIDDEN WEAPONS AND DROVE ALL BEFORE THEM.

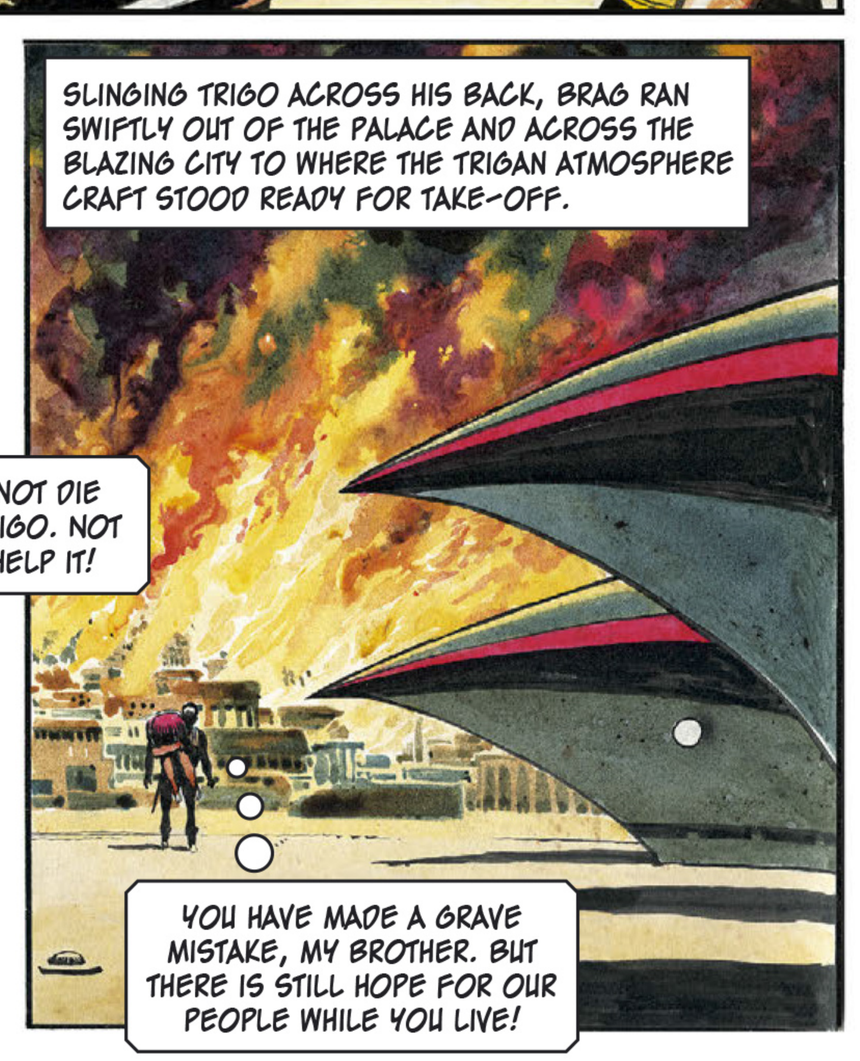
TRIGO WAS AWAKENED BY THE CRASH OF GUNFIRE AND THE RASPING OF SWORD ON SWORD. HE LEAPED FROM HIS BED WITH HIS WEAPON HISSING FROM ITS SCABBARD.
THERE HE IS! TAKE HIM ALIVE... BY ORDER OF THE ALL-HIGHEST!
BLACK TREACHERY!

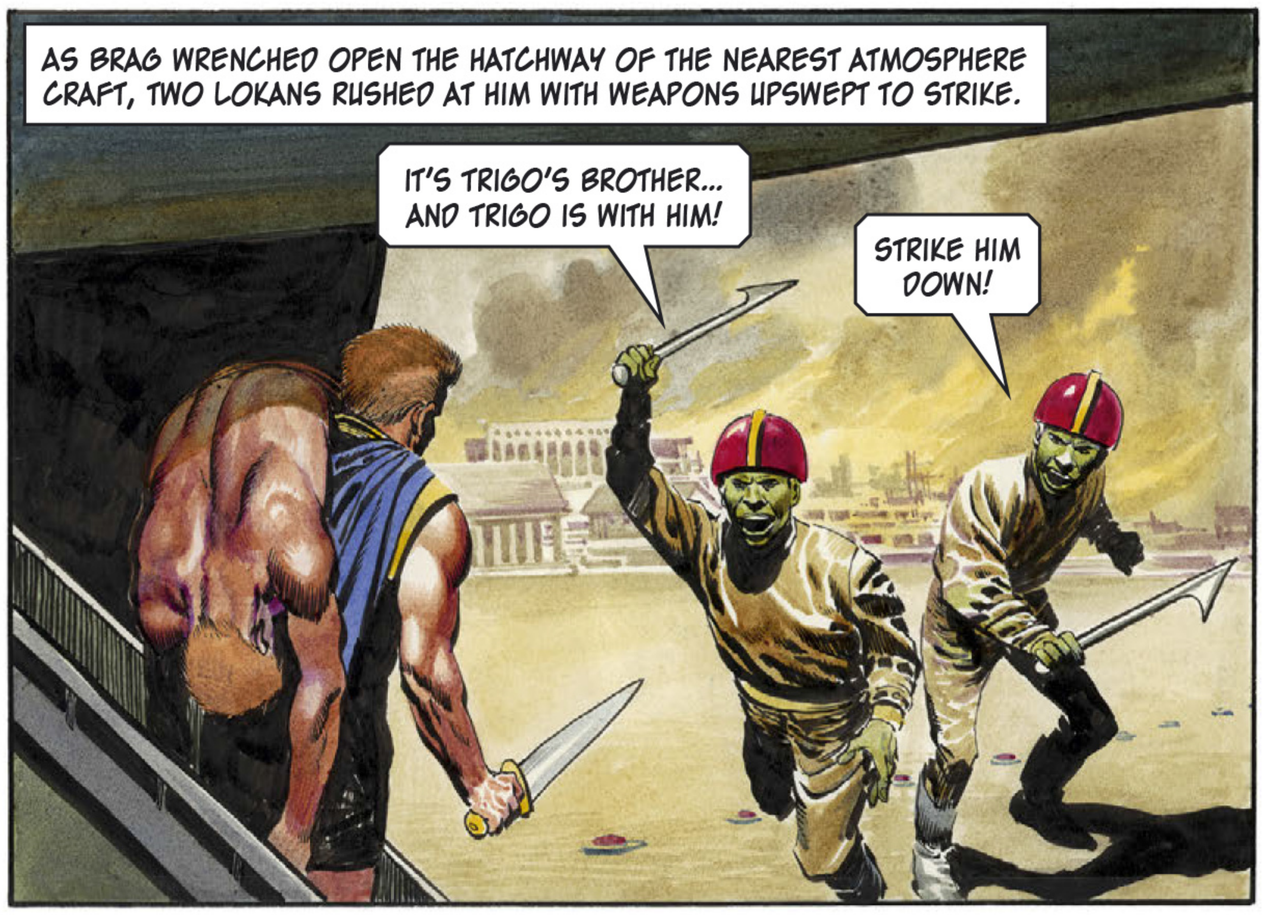
TRIGO WAS FAMED THROUGHOUT ELEKTON FOR HIS SWORD PLAY. THE TREACHEROUS LOKANS FARED BADLY IN THE SCUFFLE THAT FOLLOWED.
YOU WILL NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE, YOU CURS!
VERY WELL THEN... DEAD!

THE SUDDEN AND TIMELY ARRIVAL OF HIS BROTHER SAVED TRIGO.
THANKS, BRAG!
I SHOULD HAVE LEFT YOU TO SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR OWN FOLLY!

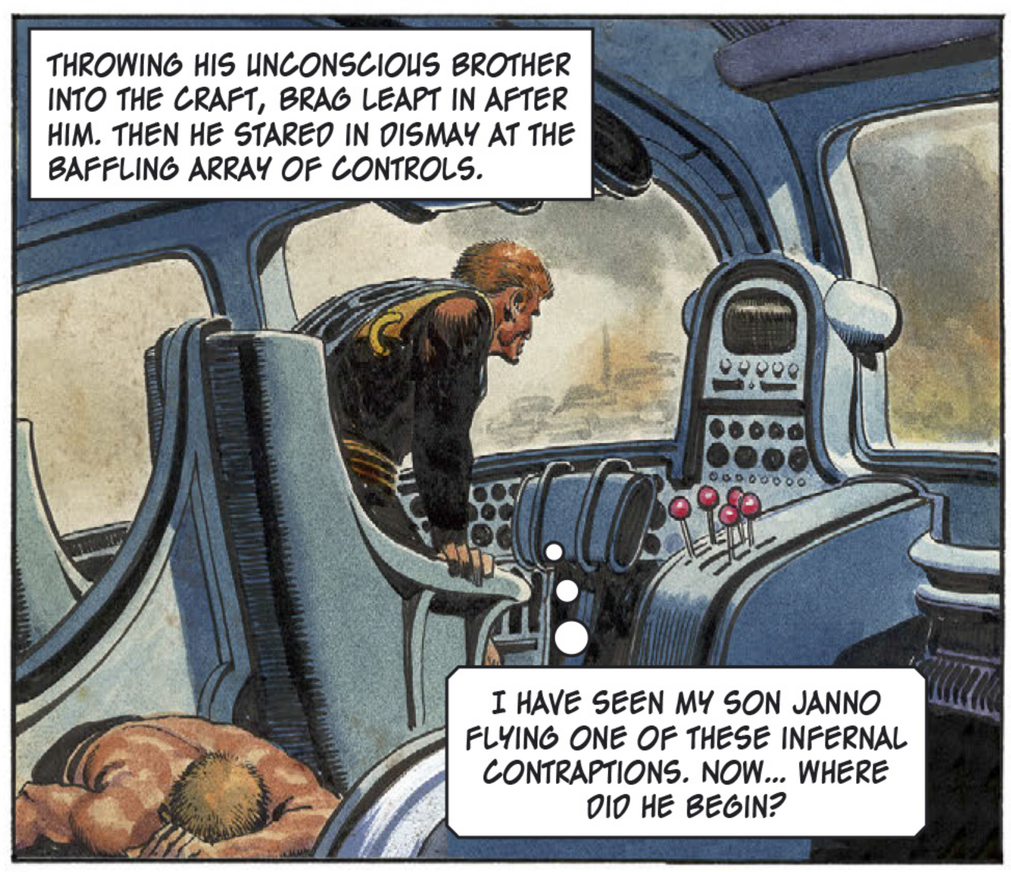
ALL IS LOST. THEY HAVE OVERPOWERED THE GUARDS. BY NOW, THE CITY WILL BE IN THEIR HANDS!
THEN ALL THAT REMAINS IS FOR US TO DIE FIGHTING. COME, BROTHER!

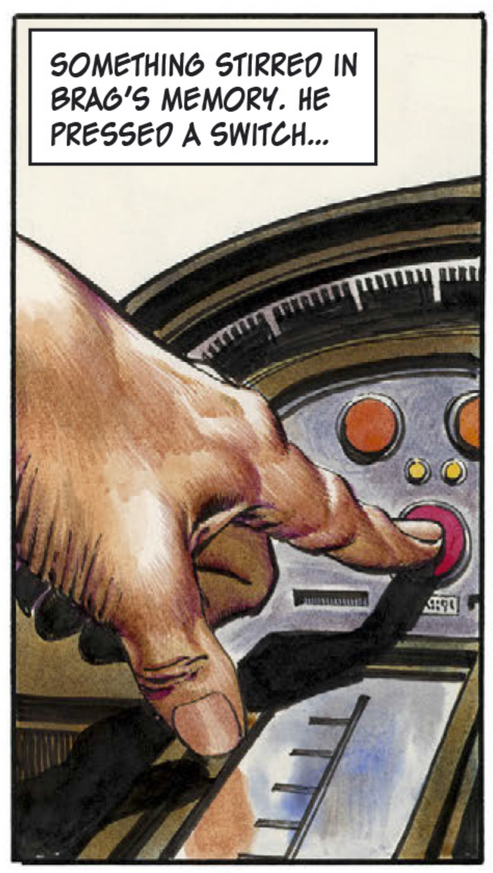

BUT SIMPLE, DEVOTED BRAG HAD OTHER IDEAS. THE FLAT OF HIS SWORD BLADE BROUGHT HIS BROTHER CRASHING TO THE FLOOR!
YOU WILL NOT DIE TONIGHT, TRIGO. NOT IF I CAN HELP IT!


SLINGING TRIGO ACROSS HIS BACK, BRAG RAN SWIFTLY OUT OF THE PALACE AND ACROSS THE BLAZING CITY TO WHERE THE TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT STOOD READY FOR TAKE-OFF.
YOU HAVE MADE A GRAVE MISTAKE, MY BROTHER. BUT THERE IS STILL HOPE FOR OUR PEOPLE WHILE YOU LIVE!


AS BRAG WRENCHED OPEN THE HATCHWAY OF THE NEAREST ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, TWO LOKANS RUSHED AT HIM WITH WEAPONS UPSWEPT TO STRIKE.
IT'S TRIGO'S BROTHER... AND TRIGO IS WITH HIM!
STRIKE HIM DOWN!

BIG AND SLOW-MOVING THOUGH HE WAS, BRAG COULD WIELD A SWORD LIKE A STREAK OF LIGHTNING.
SHARE THAT BETWEEN YOU, TREACHEROUS DEMONS!


THROWING HIS UNCONSCIOUS BROTHER INTO THE CRAFT, BRAG LEAPT IN AFTER HIM. THEN HE STARED IN DISMAY AT THE BAFFLING ARRAY OF CONTROLS.
I HAVE SEEN MY SON JANNO FLYING ONE OF THESE INFERNAL CONTRAPTIONS. NOW... WHERE DID HE BEGIN?


SOMETHING STIRRED IN BRAG'S MEMORY. HE PRESSED A SWITCH...

NEXT INSTANT, A HORDE OF ONCOMING LOKANS WERE NEARLY DECAPITATED BY THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, AS IT ROSE INTO THE AIR AND SLICED ACROSS THE GROUND, FLYING LOW.

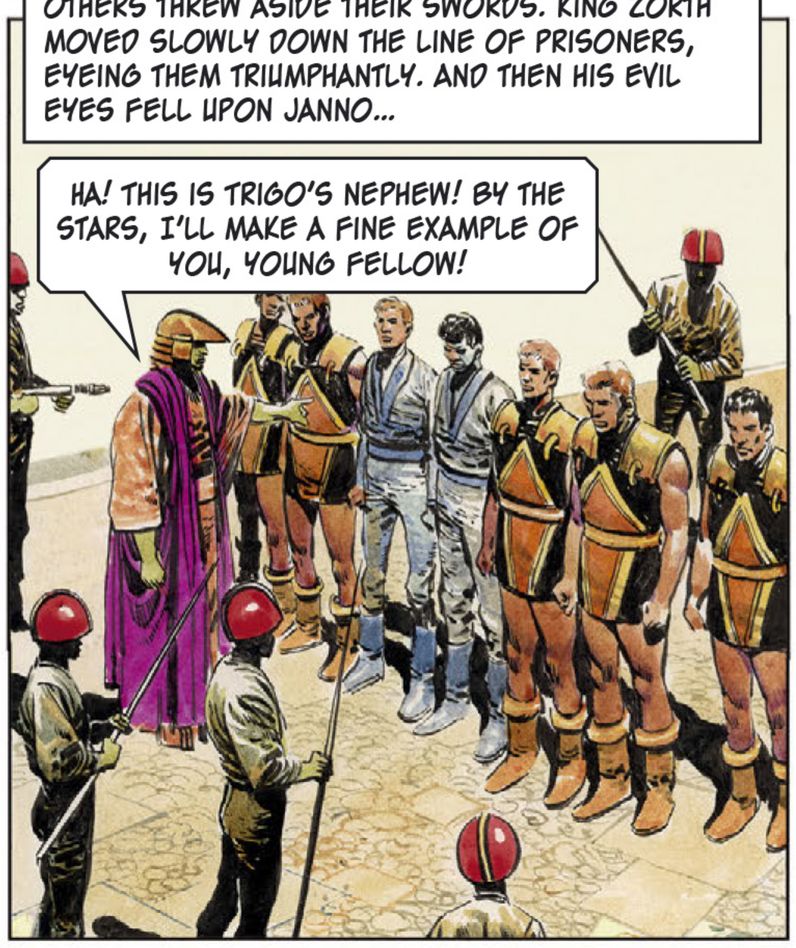
BLINDLY, BRAG PULLED AT THE CONTROL LEVER... AND THE CRAFT CLEARED A DOME OF TRIGO'S FABULOUS PALACE BY THE LENGTH OF A MAN'S ARM!
BY THE STARS... WE WERE NEARLY DEAD MEN THEN!

THE TREACHEROUS KING ZORTH OF LOKA SAW THE DEPARTURE OF THE CRAFT AND BELLOWED IN BLACK FURY.
SOME OF THEM ARE ESCAPING! SHOOT! SHOOT, YOU FOOLS!

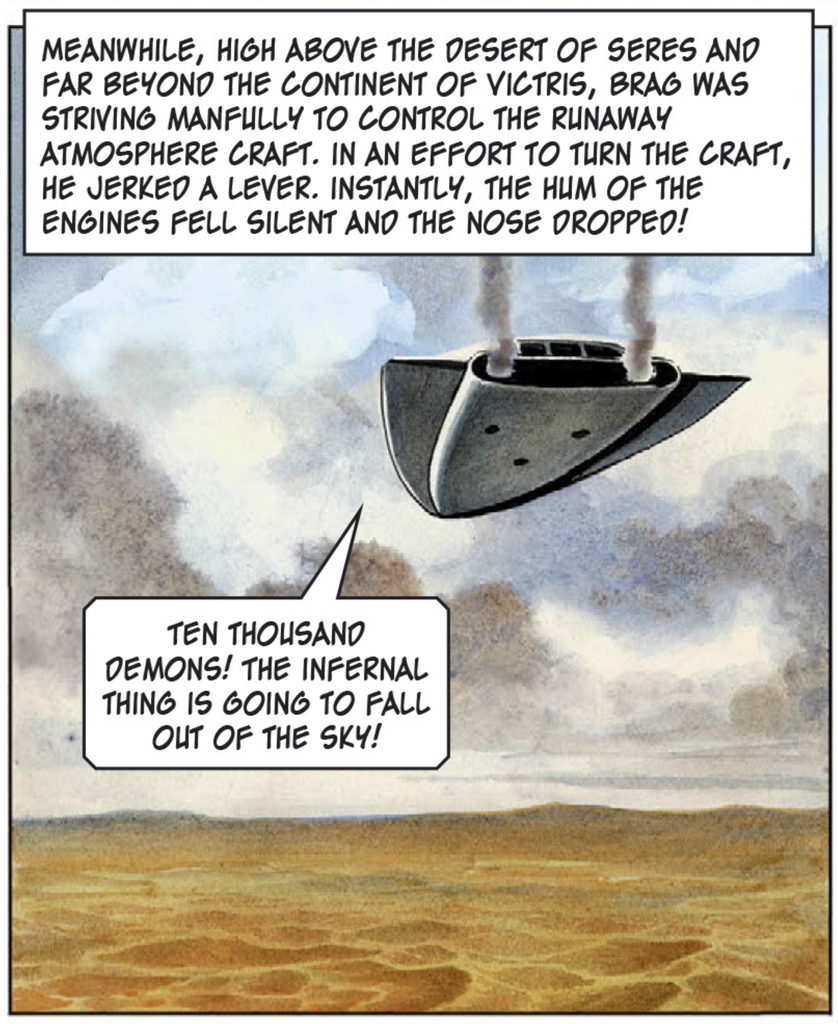
FORTUNE FAVOURED GALLANT BRAG. HE ESCAPED THE FIRE OF HIS ENEMIES... AND WAS LEFT WITH ONLY ONE PROBLEM...
I AM ONLY A SIMPLE WARRIOR. OH, IF ONLY MY SON JANNO WERE HERE TO TELL ME WHAT TO DO NEXT!

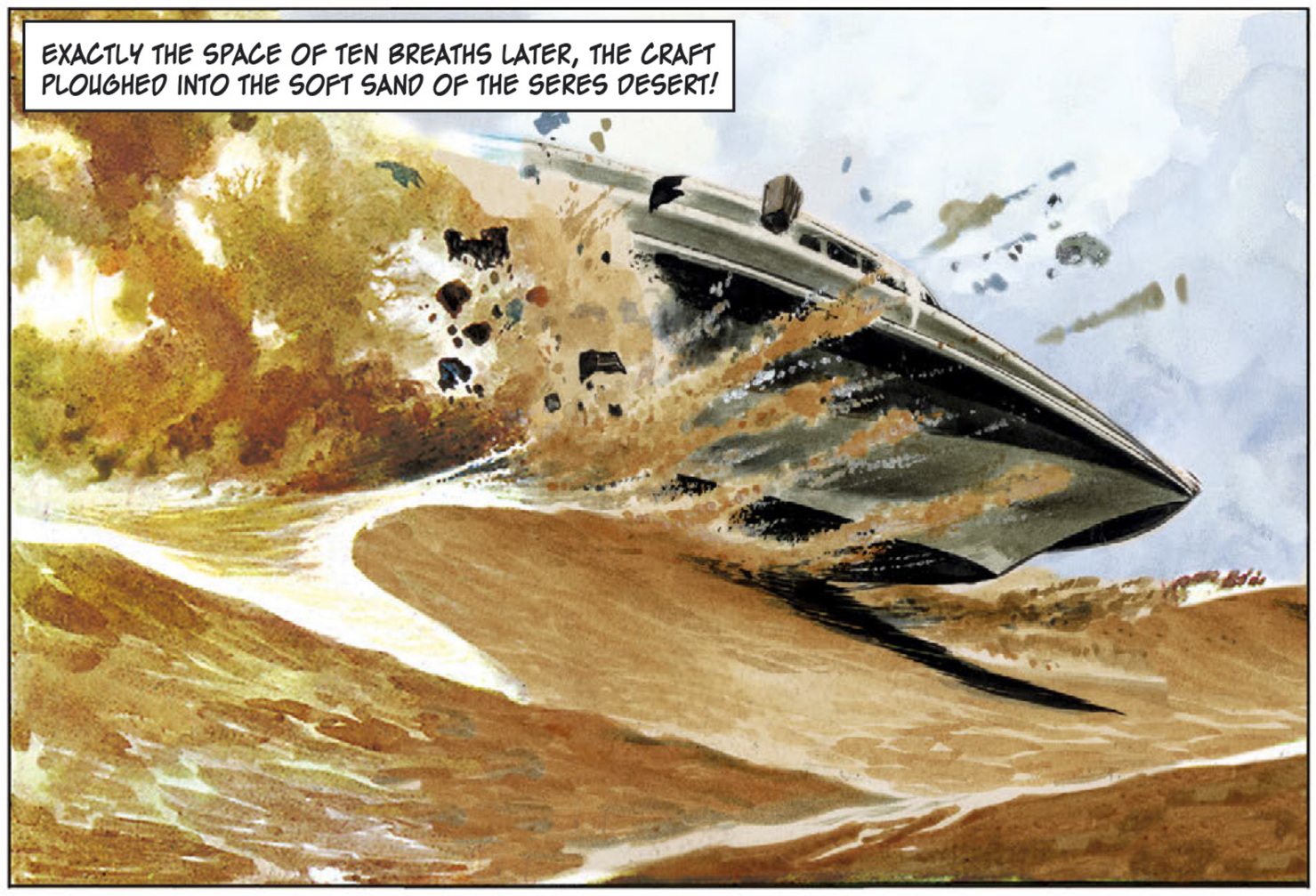
BACK IN THE CITY SQUARE, YOUNG JANNO HAD PROBLEMS OF HIS OWN. TOGETHER WITH HIS FRIEND KEREN AND THE SURVIVORS OF THE PALACE GUARD, HE WAS MAKING A LAST STAND AGAINST THE ASSAULTING LOKANS.
NO SURRENDER, KEREN! WE FIGHT TO THE END FOR THE HONOUR OF TRIGAN!
TO THE END, JANNO!

THEN THE VOICE OF THE FIENDISH KING ZORTH ECHOED ACROSS THE SQUARE.
LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPONS AND SURRENDER! IF YOU CONTINUE FIGHTING, I SHALL ELIMINATE EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN TRIGAN!

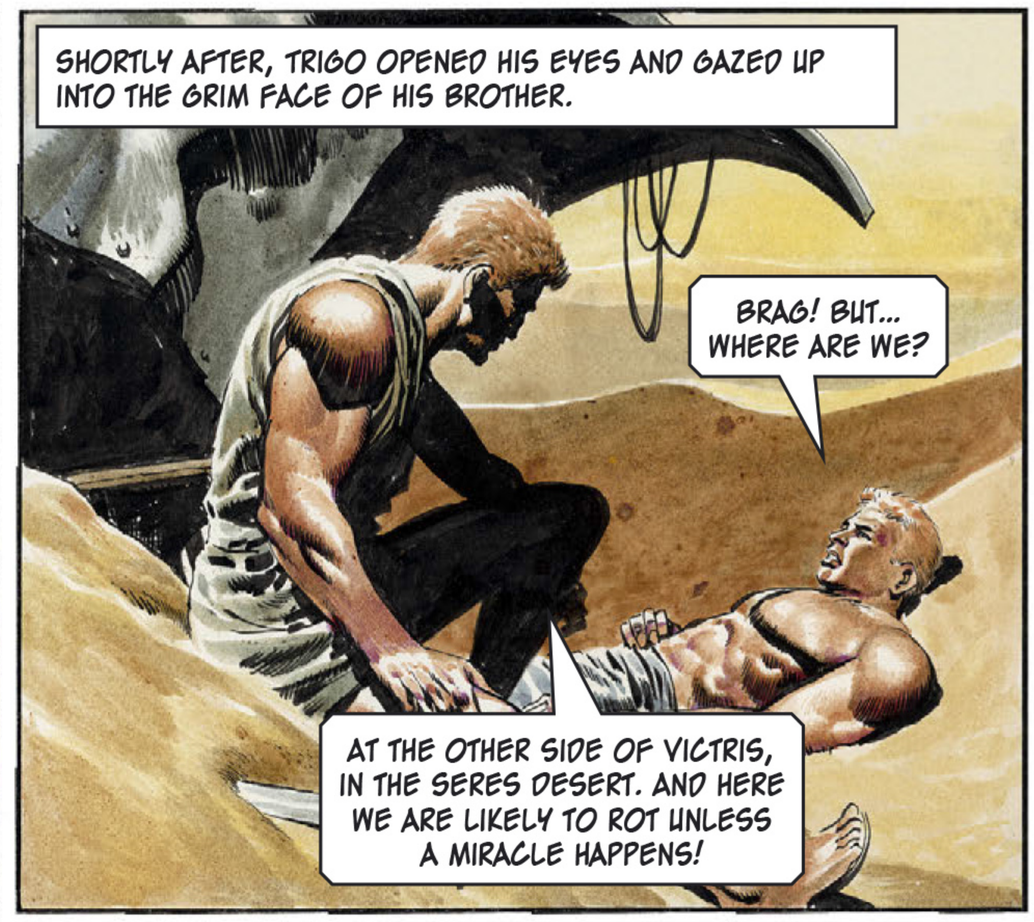

THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE FOR IT. JANNO AND THE OTHERS THREW ASIDE THEIR SWORDS. KING ZORTH MOVED SLOWLY DOWN THE LINE OF PRISONERS, EYEING THEM TRIUMPHANTLY. AND THEN HIS EVIL EYES FELL UPON JANNO...
HA! THIS IS TRIGO'S NEPHEW! BY THE STARS, I'LL MAKE A FINE EXAMPLE OF YOU, YOUNG FELLOW!

JANNO WAS SEIZED.
YOU SHALL NOT DIE SWIFTLY, OR EASILY, NEPHEW OF TRIGO! OH, NO. I WILL MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF YOU SO THAT THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN WILL KNOW WHAT IT IS TO BE RULED BY ZORTH OF LOKA! TAKE HIM AWAY!

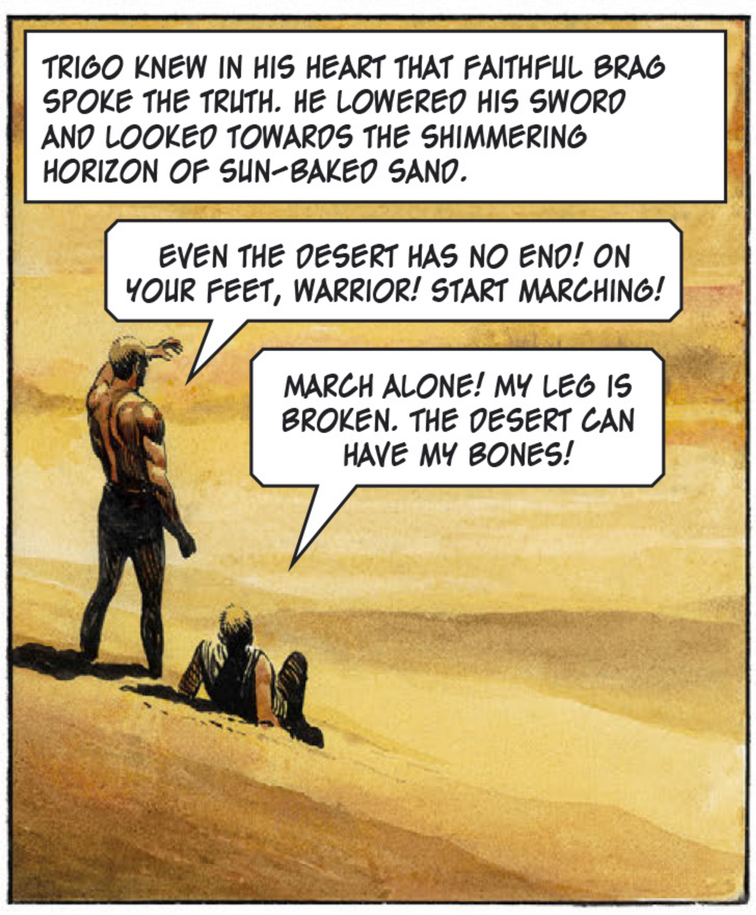

MEANWHILE, HIGH ABOVE THE DESERT OF SERES AND FAR BEYOND THE CONTINENT OF VICTRIS, BRAG WAS STRIVING MANFULLY TO CONTROL THE RUNAWAY ATMOSPHERE CRAFT. IN AN EFFORT TO TURN THE CRAFT, HE JERKED A LEVER. INSTANTLY, THE HUM OF THE ENGINES FELL SILENT AND THE NOSE DROPPED!
TEN THOUSAND DEMONS! THE INFERNAL THING IS GOING TO FALL OUT OF THE SKY!


EXACTLY THE SPACE OF TEN BREATHS LATER, THE CRAFT PLOUGHED INTO THE SOFT SAND OF THE SERES DESERT!

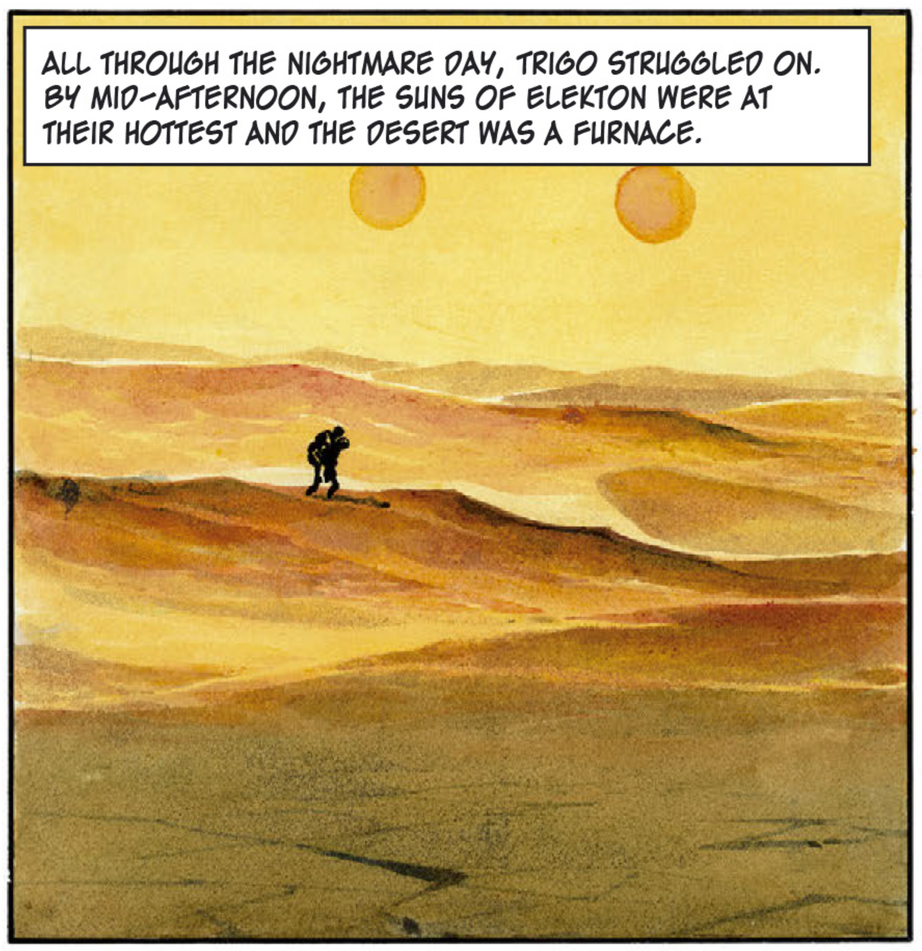
THE SOFT SAND SAVED THE LIVES OF THE TWO MEN IN THE CRAFT BUT, AS BRAG FOUND HIS WAY OUT OF THE WRECKAGE, HIS RIGHT LEG GAVE WAY BENEATH HIM.
TEN THOUSAND CURSES! MY LEG... IT'S BROKEN!


SHORTLY AFTER, TRIGO OPENED HIS EYES AND GAZED UP INTO THE GRIM FACE OF HIS BROTHER.
BRAG! BUT... WHERE ARE WE?
AT THE OTHER SIDE OF VICTRIS, IN THE SERES DESERT. AND HERE WE ARE LIKELY TO ROT UNLESS A MIRACLE HAPPENS!

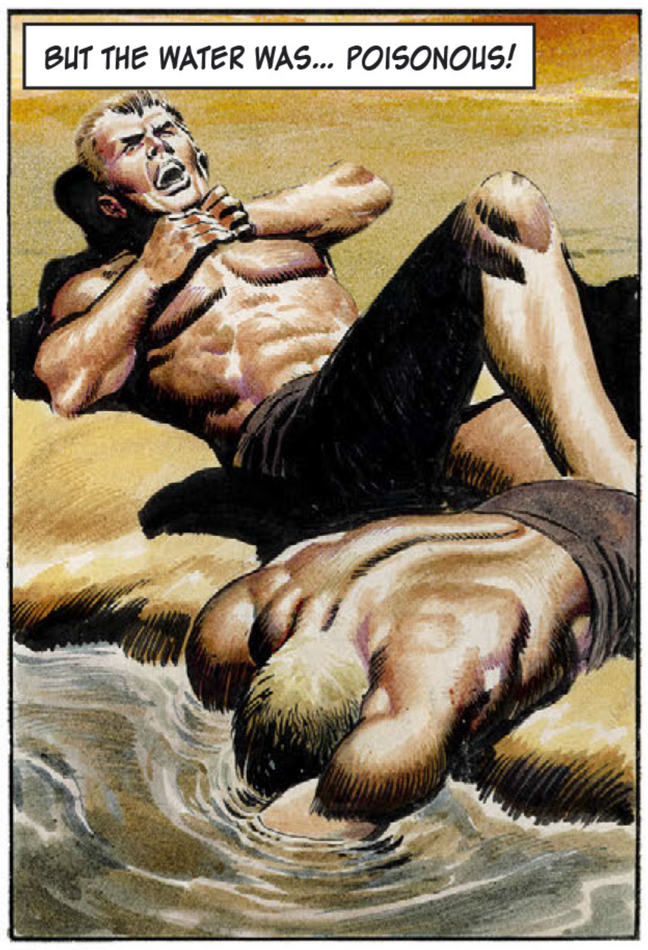
THEN TRIGO REMEMBERED HIS BROTHER STRIKING HIM. HE ROSE, FURIOUS.
MY ORDERS WERE TO STAY IN TRIGAN AND DIE FIGHTING! BY THE SUNS OF ELEKTON, I SHOULD KILL YOU FOR THIS!
KILL AWAY! WHAT I DID, I DID FOR THE BEST... THERE IS STILL HOPE FOR OUR PEOPLE WHILE YOU LIVE!


TRIGO KNEW IN HIS HEART THAT FAITHFUL BRAG SPOKE THE TRUTH. HE LOWERED HIS SWORD AND LOOKED TOWARDS THE SHIMMERING HORIZON OF SUN-BAKED SAND.
EVEN THE DESERT HAS NO END! ON YOUR FEET, WARRIOR! START MARCHING!
MARCH ALONE! MY LEG IS BROKEN. THE DESERT CAN HAVE MY BONES!

DISREGARDING HIS BROTHER'S PROTESTS, TRIGO HOISTED HIM ACROSS HIS BROAD BACK AND SET OFF.
LEAVE ME, TRIGO! I DESERVE MY FATE!
YOU DO INDEED. BUT WHEN I CAN WALK NO LONGER, I SHALL CRAWL- AND DRAG YOU BEHIND ME!


ALL THROUGH THE NIGHTMARE DAY, TRIGO STRUGGLED ON. BY MID-AFTERNOON, THE SUNS OF ELEKTON WERE AT THEIR HOTTEST AND THE DESERT WAS A FURNACE.

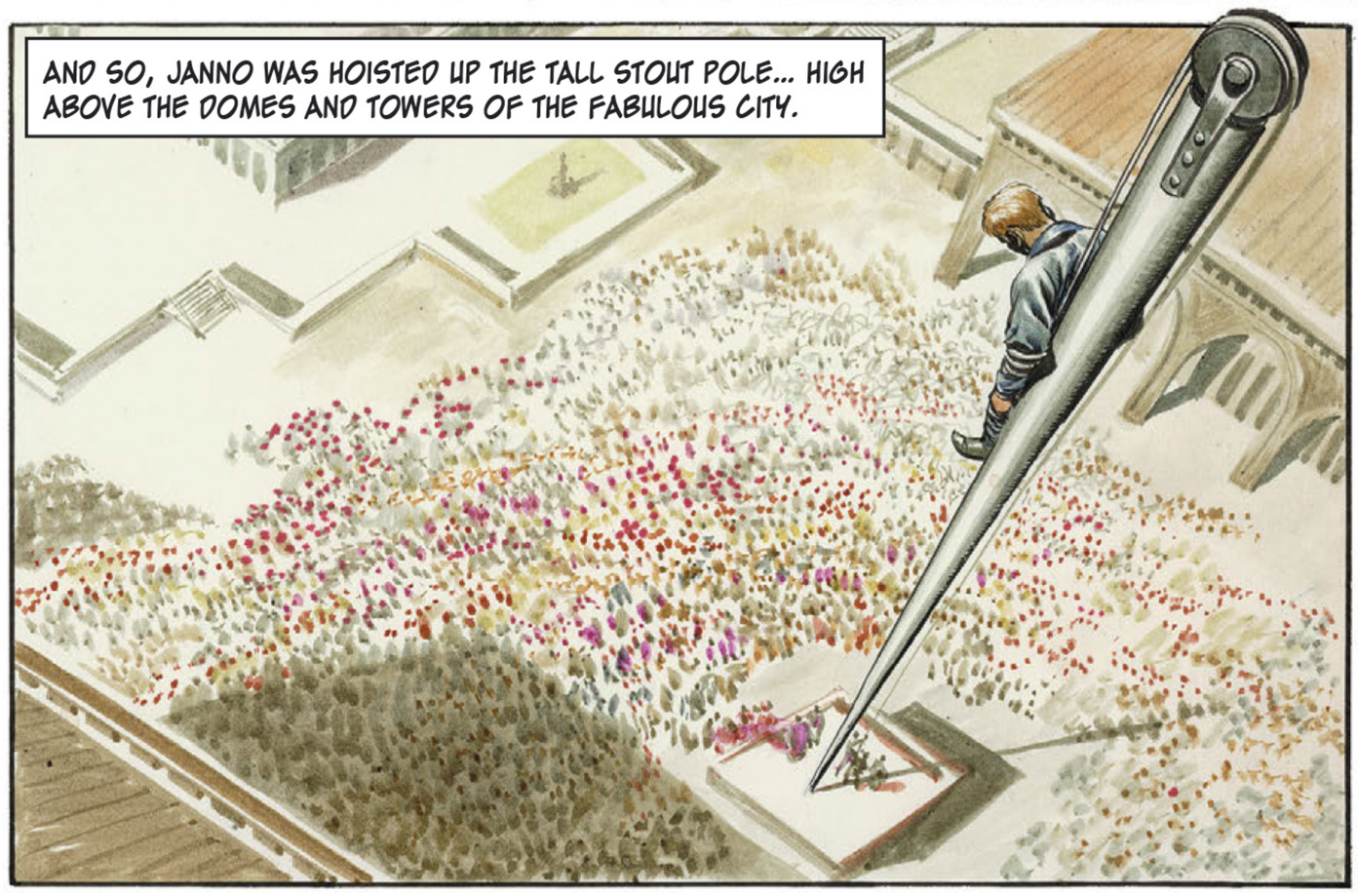
IN THE EVENING THEY CAME TO A WATER HOLE. AND THERE THEY SLAKED THEIR RAVENING THIRSTS.


BUT THE WATER WAS... POISONOUS!

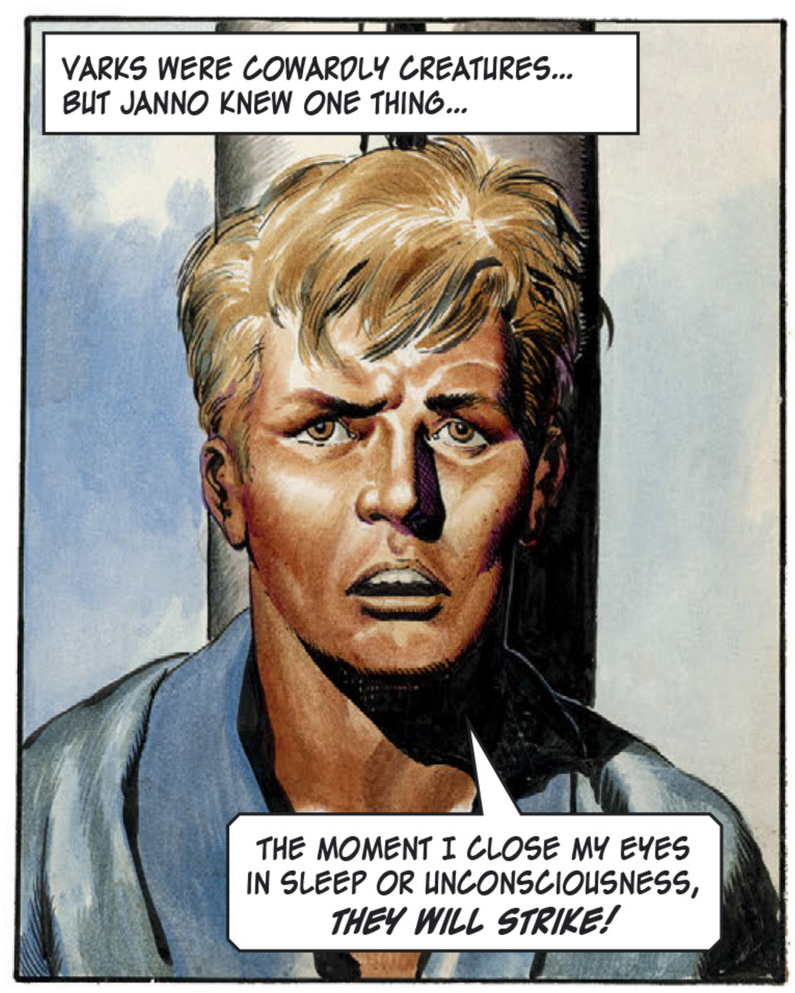
MEANWHILE, BACK IN TRIGAN, THE VICTORIOUS LOKANS WERE HERDING THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY INTO THE GREAT SQUARE...
MOVE, WRETCHES! THE ALL-HIGHEST, KING ZORTH, HAS NEWS FOR YOU!

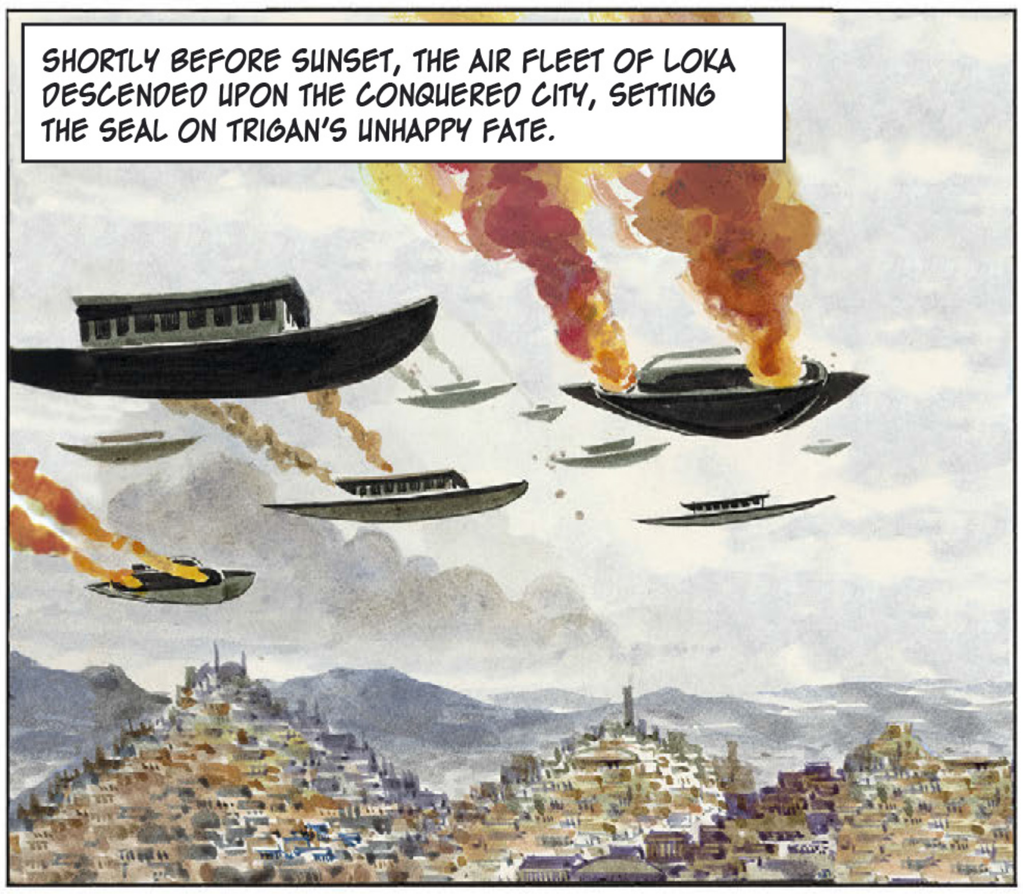
ON A RAISED PLATFORM AT THE END OF THE SQUARE, KING ZORTH OF LOKA STOOD WITH TRIGO'S YOUNG NEPHEW, JANNO.
YOU WILL ADDRESS THE PEOPLE! YOU WILL TELL THEM THAT TRIGO AND YOUR FATHER FLED FROM THE CITY IN PANIC AND DESERTED THEM TO THEIR FATE! SPEAK!

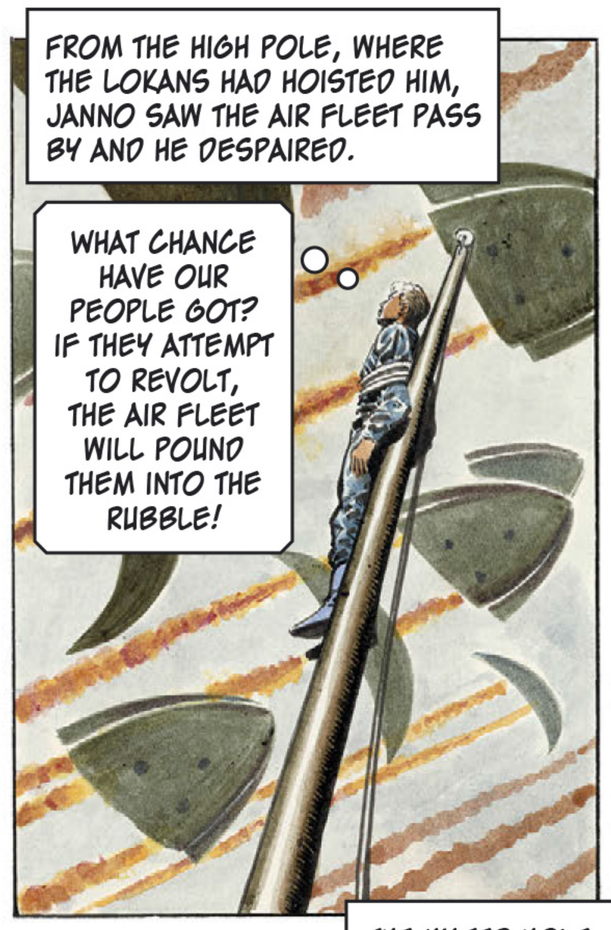
JANNO'S VOICE WAS DEFIANT.
I WILL DO NO SUCH THING!
WE SHALL SEE ABOUT THAT! HOIST HIM UP THERE!


AND SO, JANNO WAS HOISTED UP THE TALL STOUT POLE... HIGH ABOVE THE DOMES AND TOWERS OF THE FABULOUS CITY.

INSTANTLY, A FLOCK OF VARKS—THE CARRION BIRDS OF ELEKTON—BEGAN TO CIRCLE AROUND THE HELPLESS BOY, SCREAMING WITH SAVAGE ANTICIPATION.

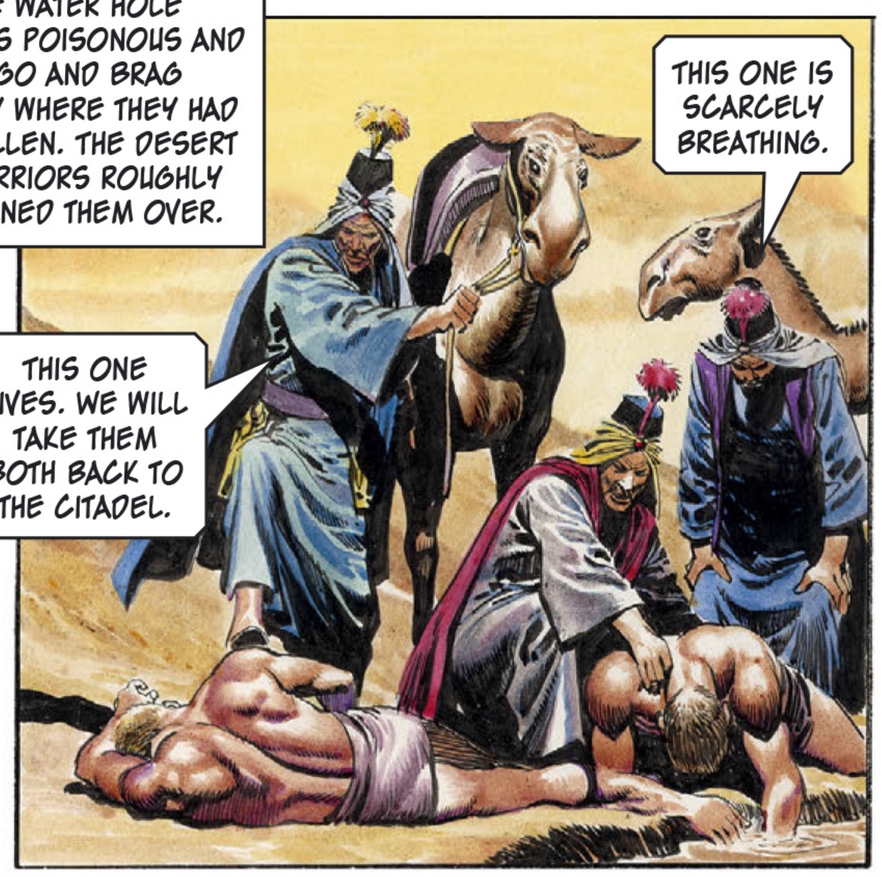

VARKS WERE COWARDLY CREATURES... BUT JANNO KNEW ONE THING...
THE MOMENT I CLOSE MY EYES IN SLEEP OR UNCONSCIOUSNESS, THEY WILL STRIKE!

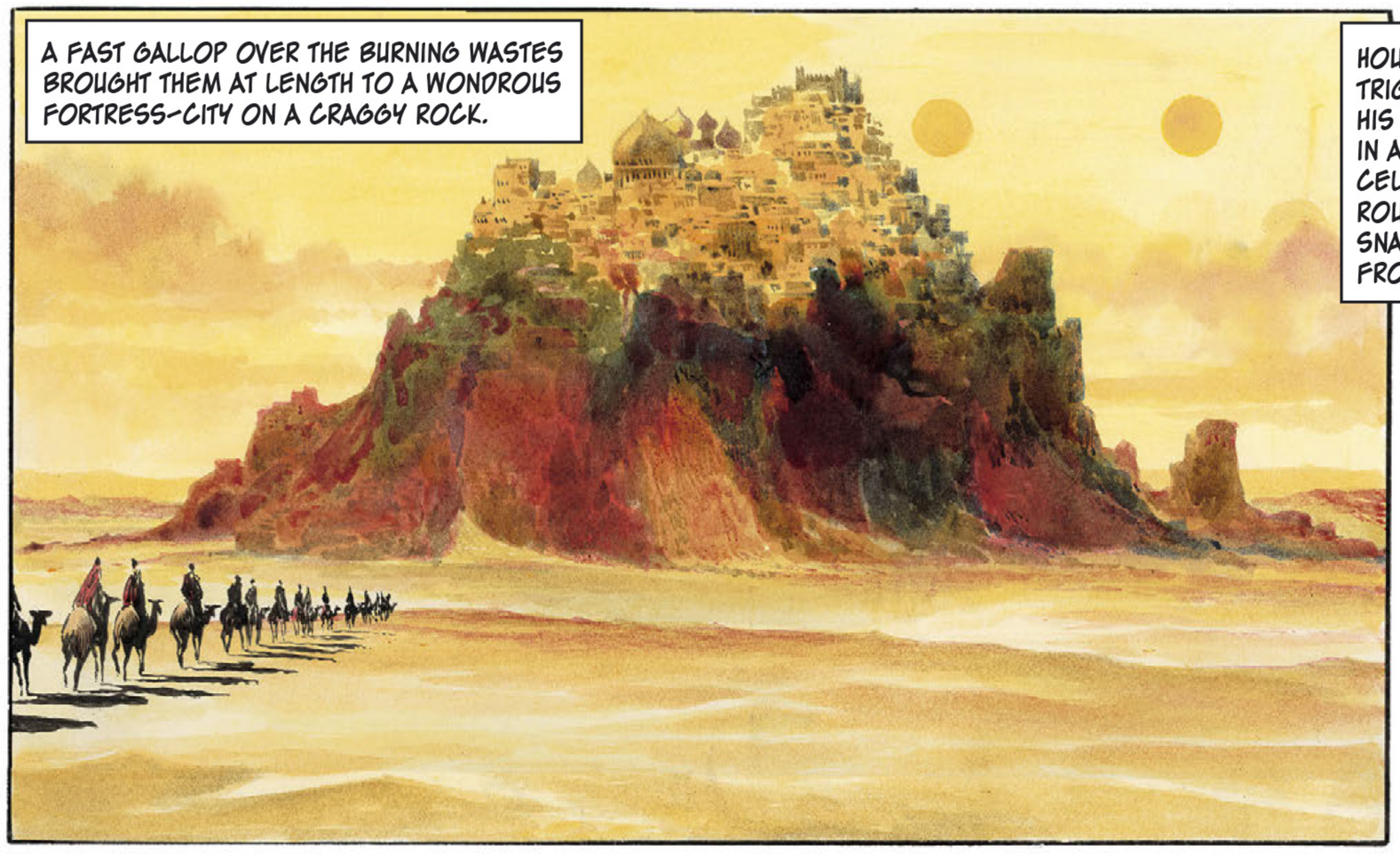

SHORTLY BEFORE SUNSET, THE AIR FLEET OF LOKA DESCENDED UPON THE CONQUERED CITY, SETTING THE SEAL ON TRIGAN'S UNHAPPY FATE.


FROM THE HIGH POLE, WHERE THE LOKANS HAD HOISTED HIM, JANNO SAW THE AIR FLEET PASS BY AND HE DESPAIRED.
WHAT CHANCE HAVE OUR PEOPLE GOT? IF THEY ATTEMPT TO REVOLT, THE AIR FLEET WILL POUND THEM INTO THE RUBBLE!

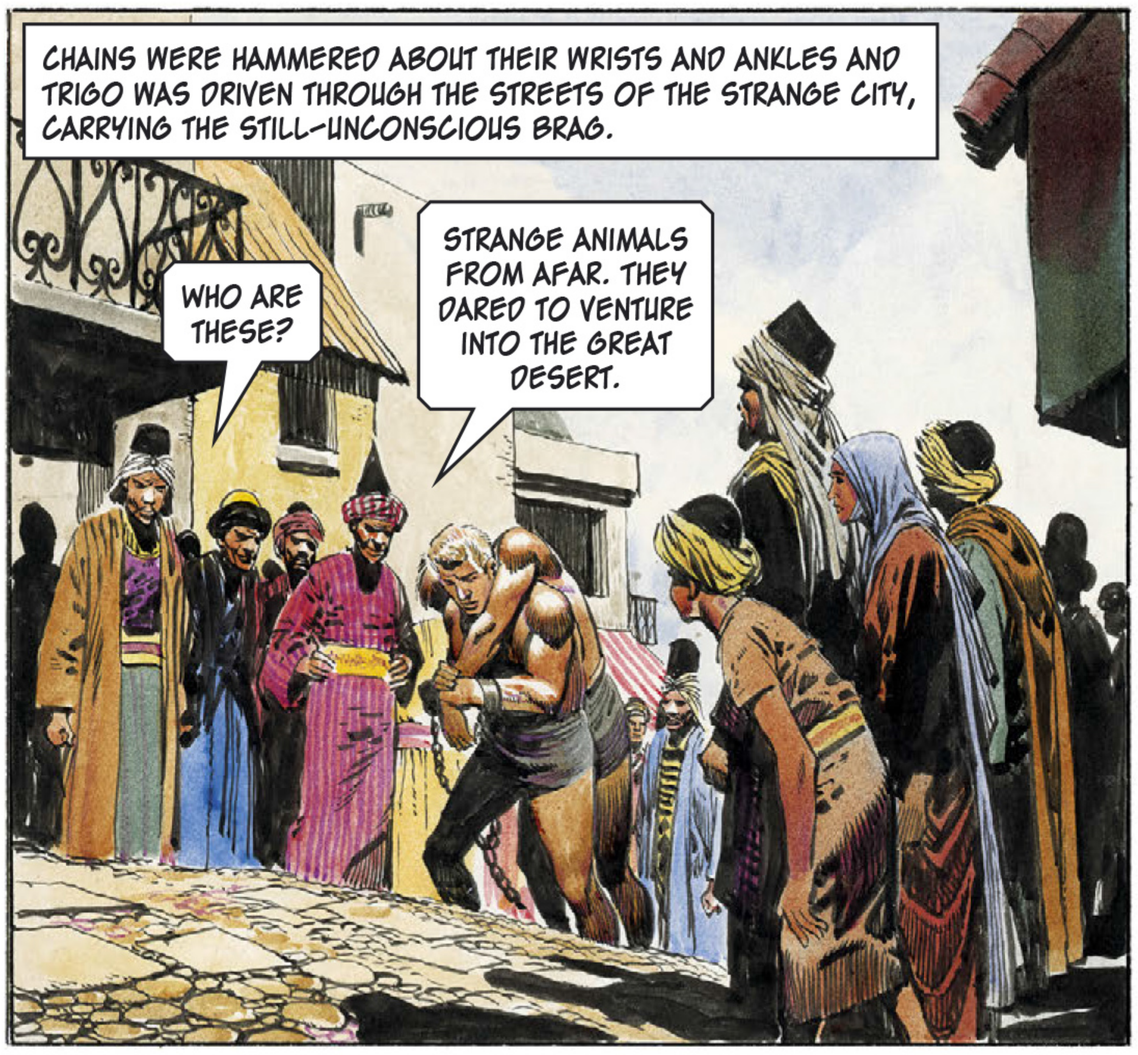
THEN THE SAVAGE VARKS BEGAN TO CIRCLE HIM AGAIN AND JANNO FOUGHT TO KEEP HIS WEARY EYES OPEN.
I MUST NOT FALL ASLEEP OR THEY WILL HAVE ME!

IT WAS STILL NOONDAY IN THE FAR-OFF SERES DESERT AND A HOST OF DESERT WARRIORS CAME THUNDERING OVER THE PLAIN. THEIR LEADER POINTED...
STRANGERS AT THE WATER HOLE!


THE WATER HOLE WAS POISONOUS AND TRIGO AND BRAG LAY WHERE THEY HAD FALLEN. THE DESERT WARRIORS ROUGHLY TURNED THEM OVER.
THIS ONE IS SCARCELY BREATHING.
THIS ONE LIVES. WE WILL TAKE THEM BOTH BACK TO THE CITADEL.

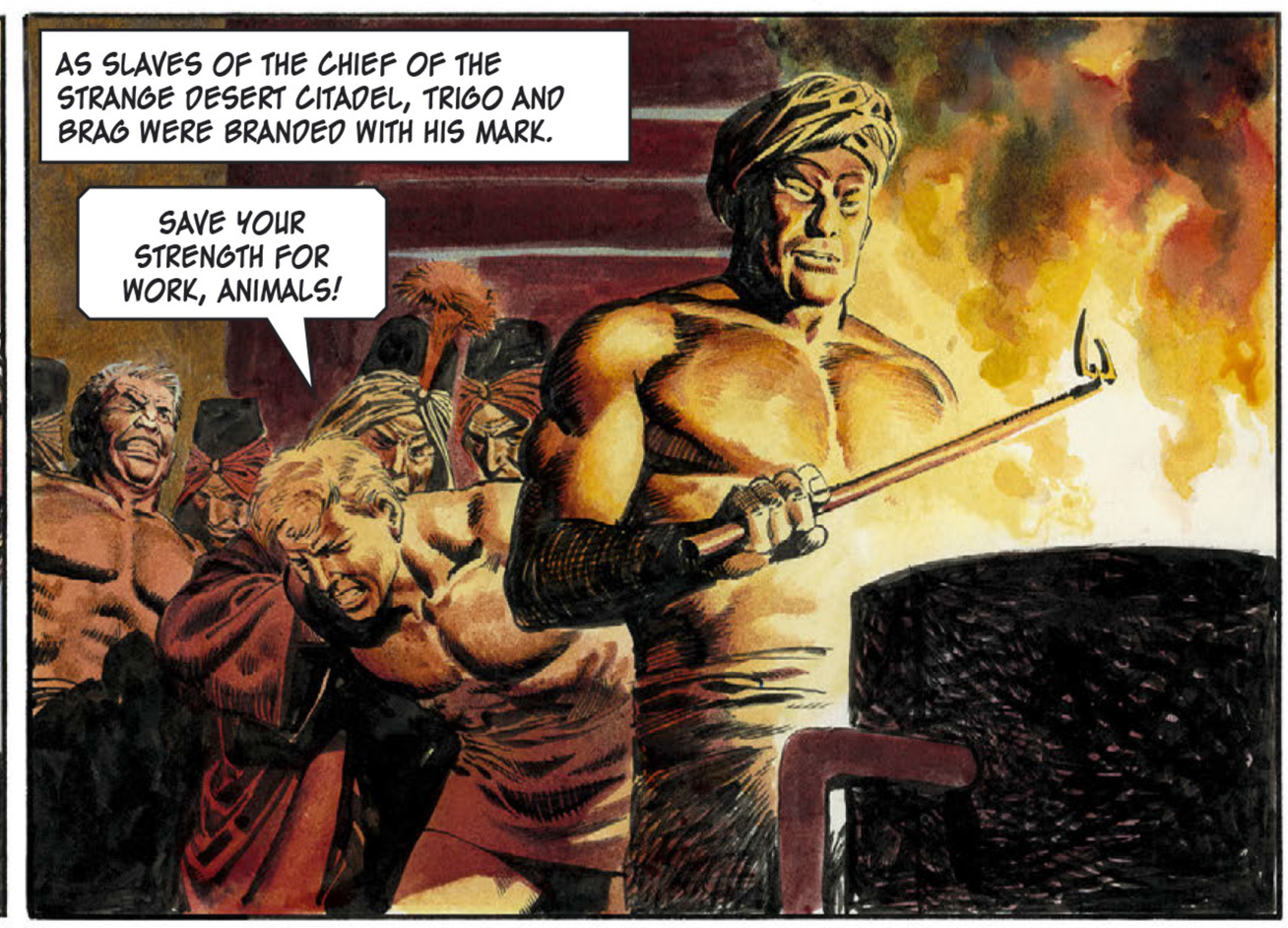

A FAST GALLOP OVER THE BURNING WASTES BROUGHT THEM AT LENGTH TO A WONDROUS FORTRESS-CITY ON A CRAGGY ROCK.

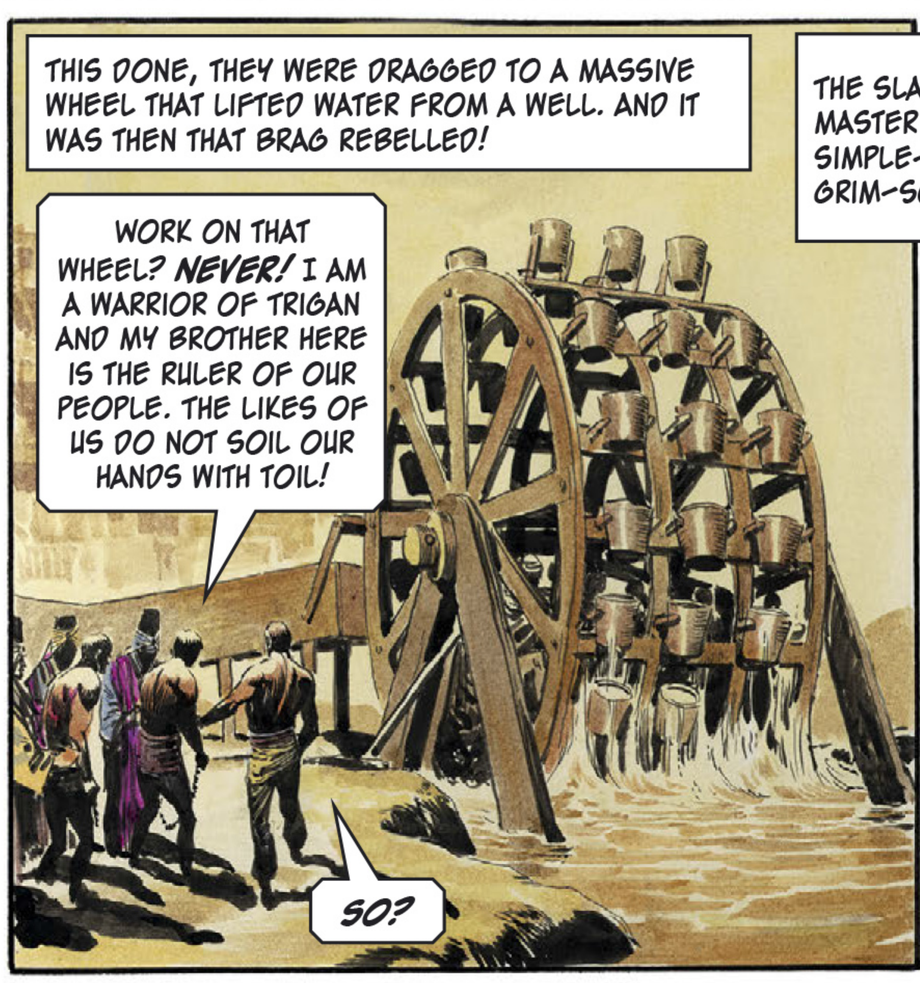
HOURS LATER, TRIGO RAISED HIS ACHING HEAD IN A DANK, DARK CELL... AS A ROUGH VOICE SNARLED AT HIM FROM THE DOOR.
ON YOUR FEET, ANIMAL! YOUR TIME HAS COME!

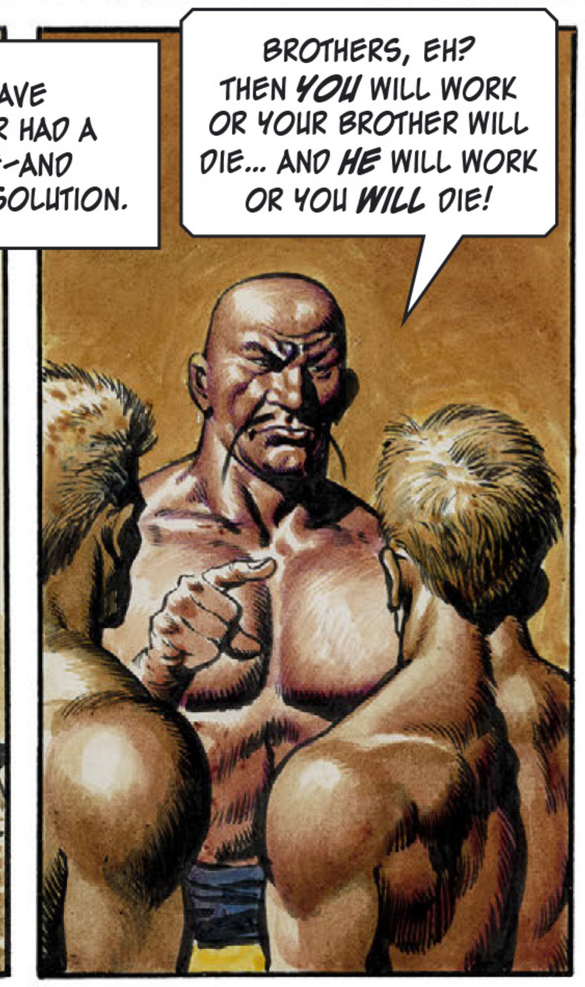

CHAINS WERE HAMMERED ABOUT THEIR WRISTS AND ANKLES AND TRIGO WAS DRIVEN THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE STRANGE CITY, CARRYING THE STILL-UNCONSCIOUS BRAG.
WHO ARE THESE?
STRANGE ANIMALS FROM AFAR. THEY DARED TO VENTURE INTO THE GREAT DESERT.

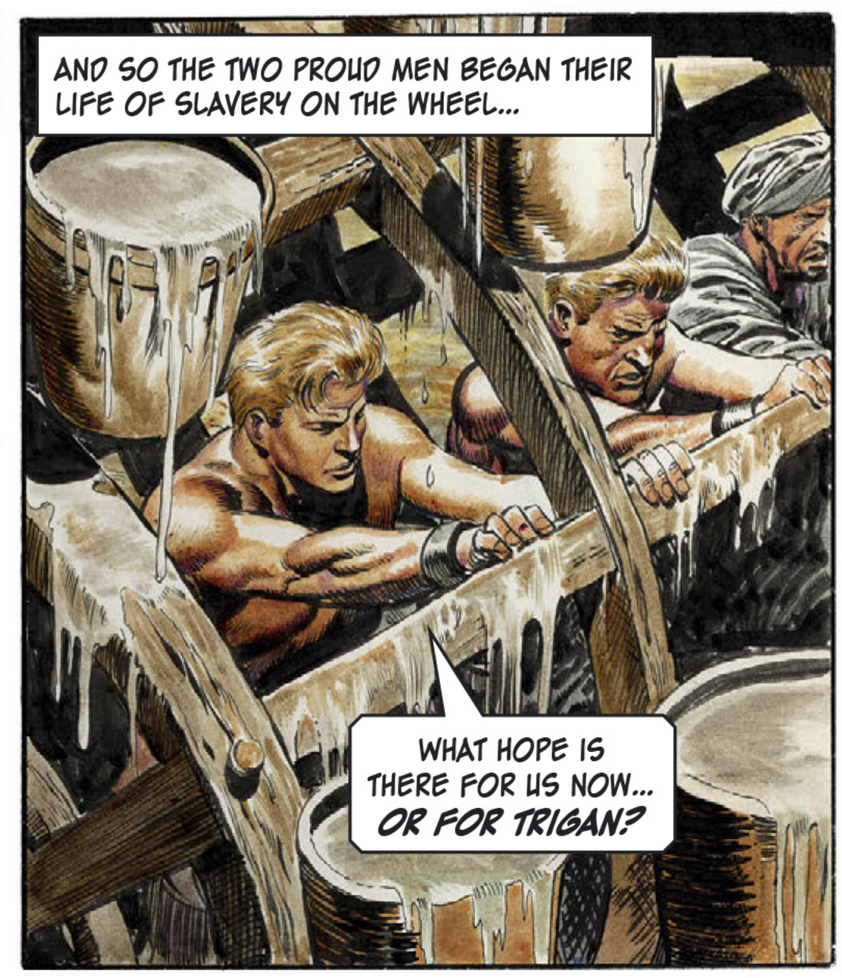
IN THE CROWDED MARKET PLACE, THE TWO BROTHERS WERE AUCTIONED AS SLAVES.
WHO WILL BUY THESE TWO FINE ANIMALS? SPEAK UP! THEY HAVE YEARS OF WORK IN THEM!
I OFFER TWENTY GOPEKS!
TWENTY-FIVE GOPEKS!

AND THEY WENT TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER.
SOLD TO THE SLAVE MASTER OF OUR NOBLE CHIEF!

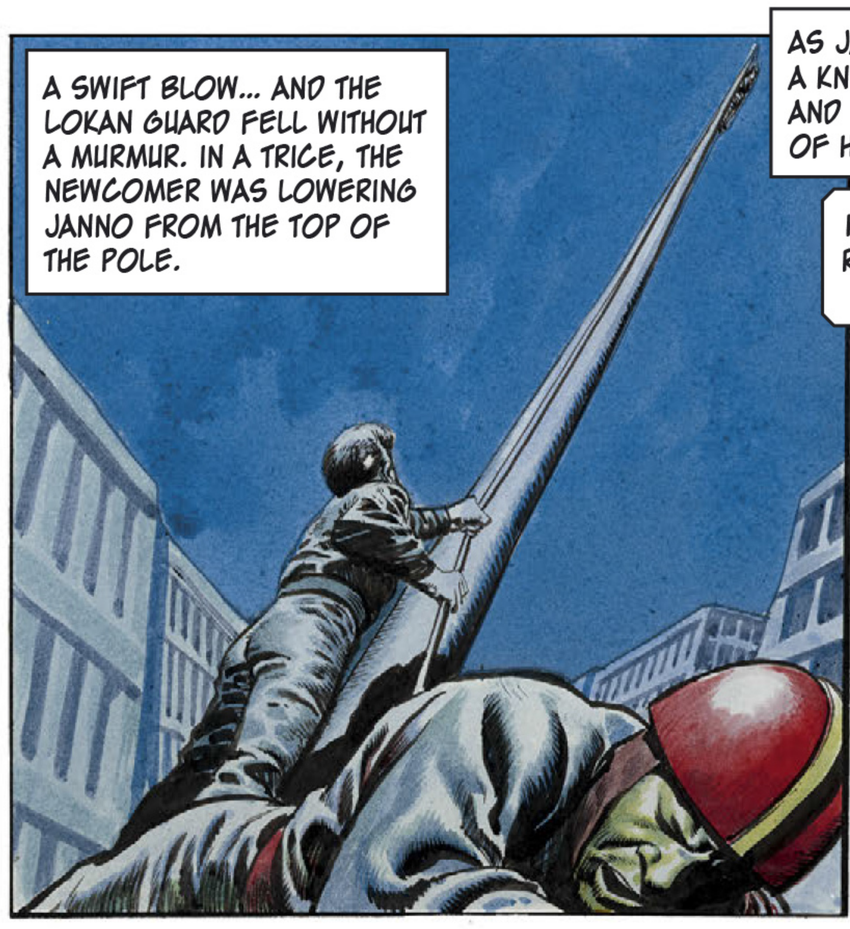

AS SLAVES OF THE CHIEF OF THE STRANGE DESERT CITADEL, TRIGO AND BRAG WERE BRANDED WITH HIS MARK.
SAVE YOUR STRENGTH FOR WORK, ANIMALS!


THIS DONE, THEY WERE DRAGGED TO A MASSIVE WHEEL THAT LIFTED WATER FROM A WELL. AND IT WAS THEN THAT BRAG REBELLED!
WORK ON THAT WHEEL? NEVER! I AM A WARRIOR OF TRIGAN AND MY BROTHER HERE IS THE RULER OF OUR PEOPLE. THE LIKES OF US DO NOT SOIL OUR HANDS WITH TOIL!
SO?

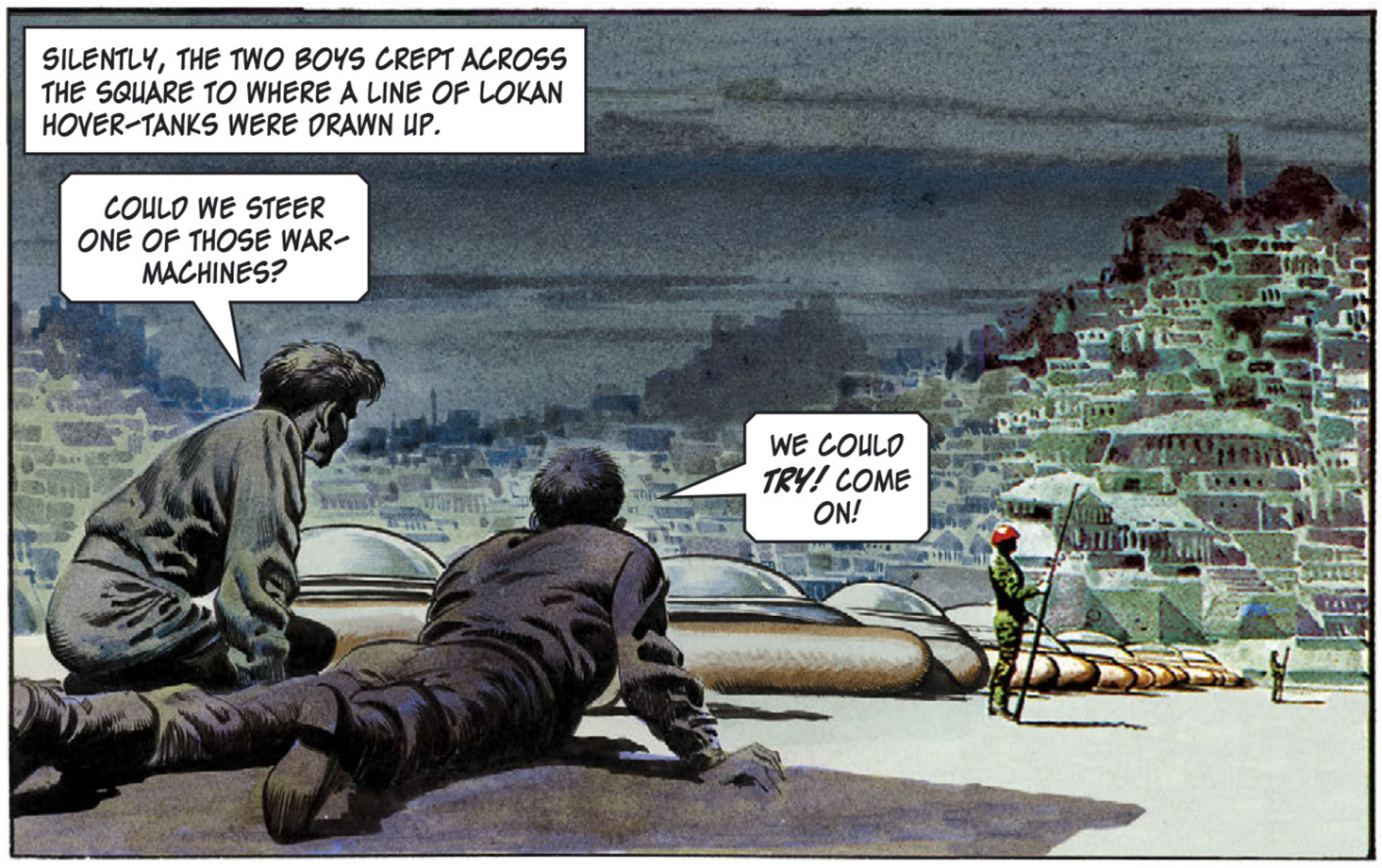

THE SLAVE MASTER HAD A SIMPLE-AND GRIM-SOLUTION.
BROTHERS, EH? THEN YOU WILL WORK OR YOUR BROTHER WILL DIE... AND HE WILL WORK OR YOU WILL DIE!

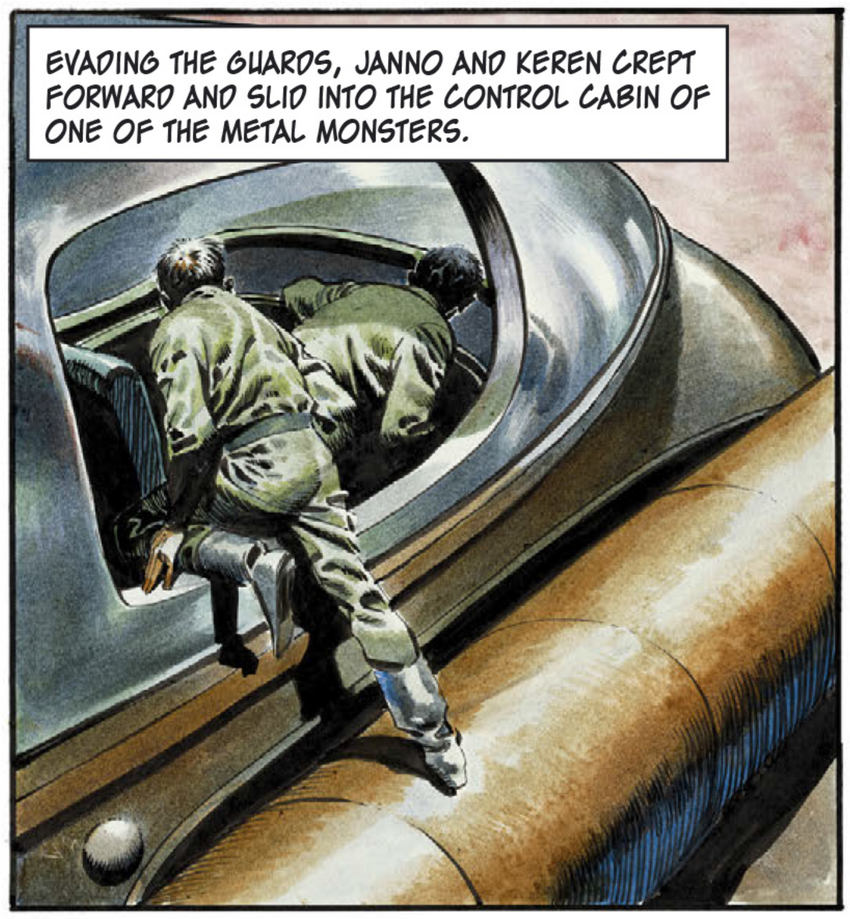

AND SO THE TWO PROUD MEN BEGAN THEIR LIFE OF SLAVERY ON THE WHEEL...
WHAT HOPE IS THERE FOR US NOW... OR FOR TRIGAN?

IN THE DARK HOURS OF THE NIGHT, A SHADOWY FIGURE FLITTED TOWARDS THE BASE OF THE POLE IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF TRIGAN.

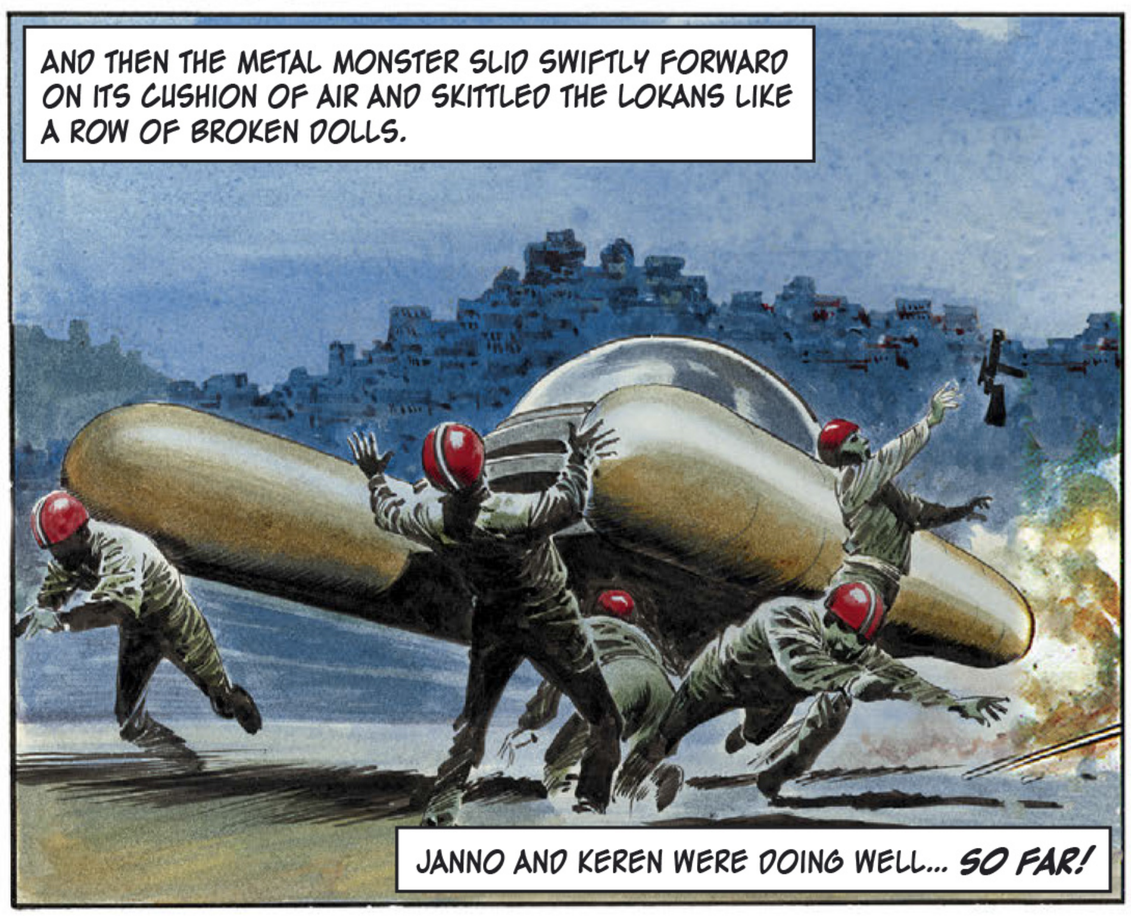

A SWIFT BLOW... AND THE LOKAN GUARD FELL WITHOUT A MURMUR. IN A TRICE, THE NEWCOMER WAS LOWERING JANNO FROM THE TOP OF THE POLE.

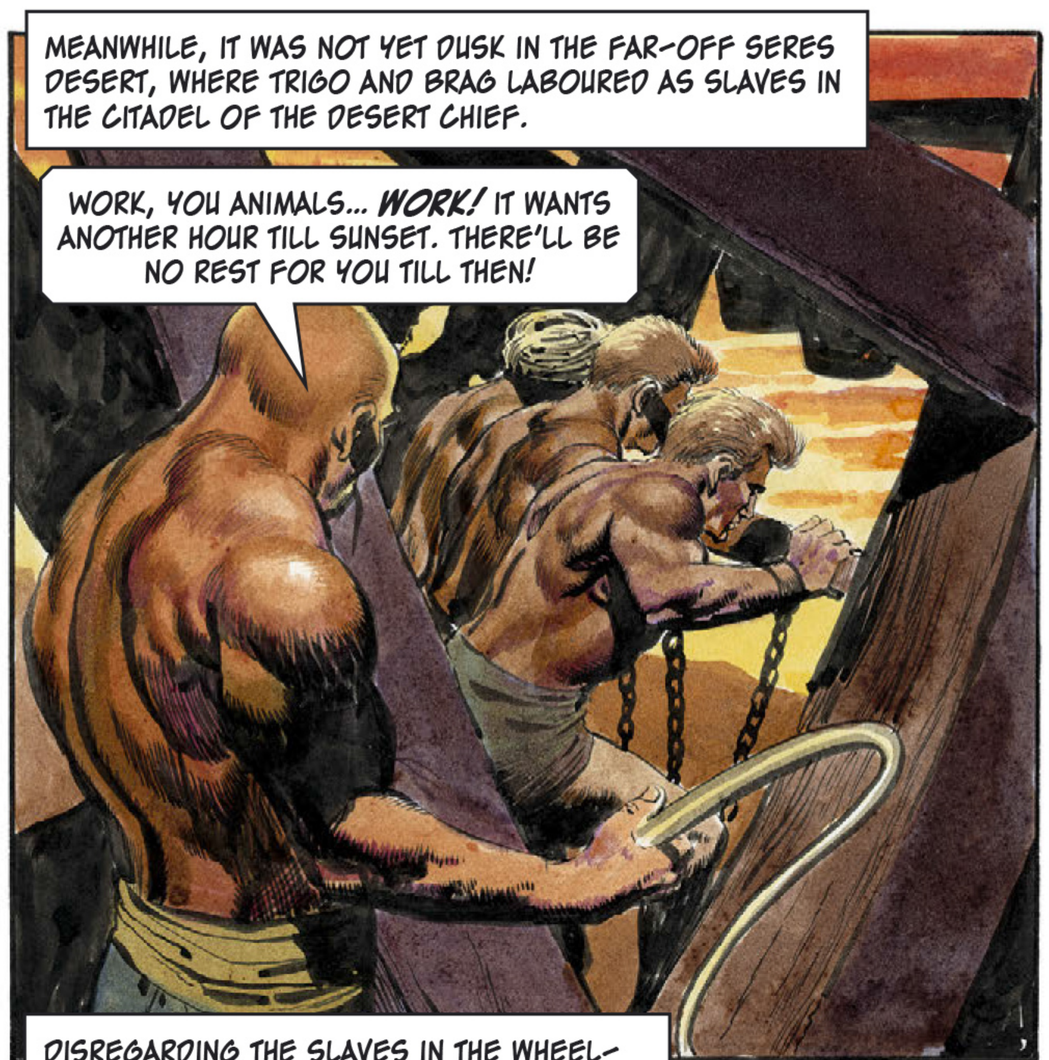
AS JANNO'S FEET TOUCHED THE GROUND, A KNIFE SLICED THROUGH HIS BONDS... AND HE TURNED TO LOOK INTO THE FACE OF HIS FRIEND, KEREN.
KEREN! YOU HAVE RISKED YOUR LIFE TO SAVE ME!
SAVE YOUR PRAISES AND LET'S GET AWAY FROM HERE.

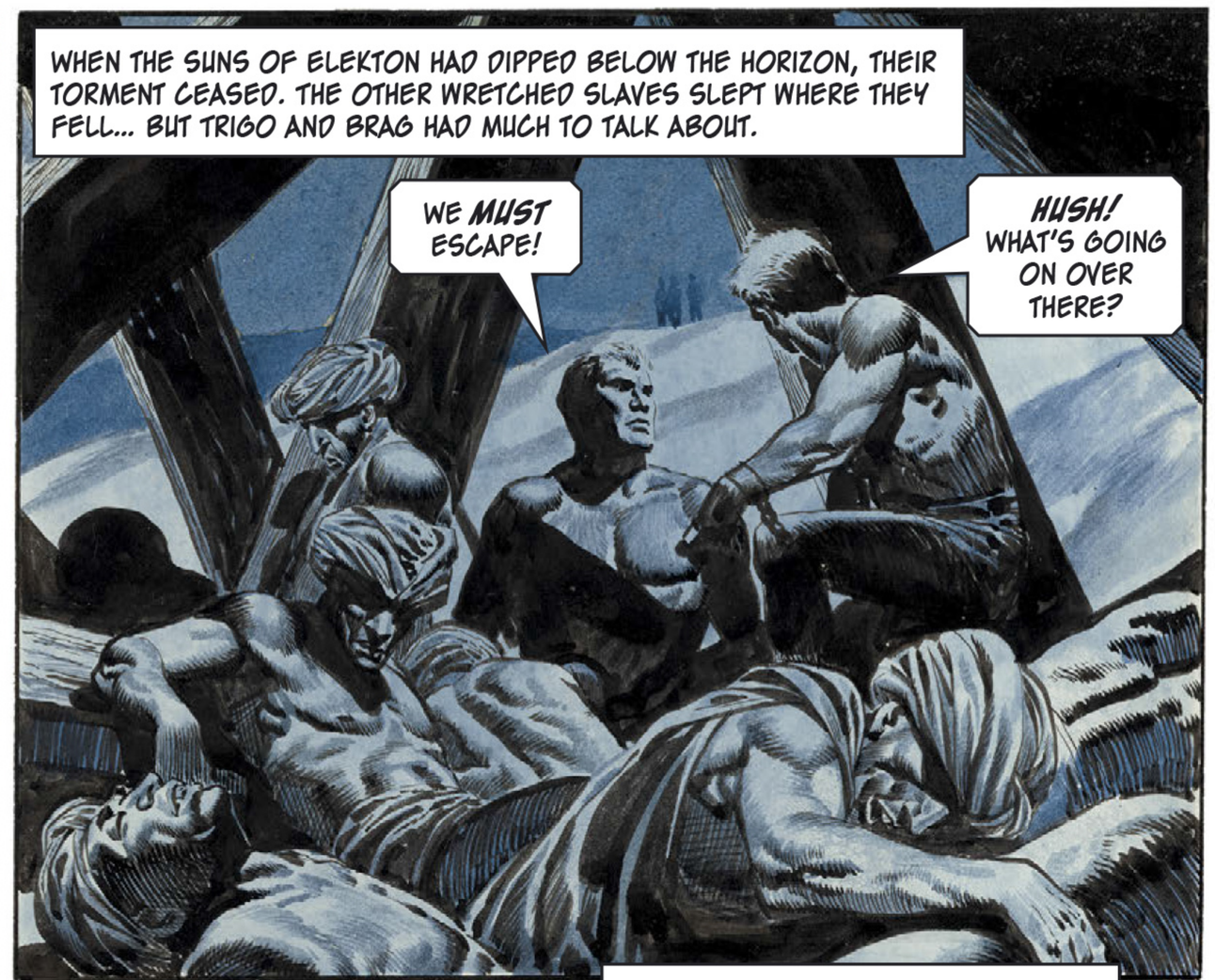

SILENTLY, THE TWO BOYS CREPT ACROSS THE SQUARE TO WHERE A LINE OF LOKAN HOVER-TANKS WERE DRAWN UP.
COULD WE STEER ONE OF THOSE WAR-MACHINES?
WE COULD *TRY!* COME ON!


EVADING THE GUARDS, JANNO AND KEREN CREPT FORWARD AND SLID INTO THE CONTROL CABIN OF ONE OF THE METAL MONSTERS.

SOON AFTER, THE GUARDS TURNED IN ALARM AS, WITH A ROAR OF ROCKET EXHAUSTS, THE ENGINES OF THE HOVER-TANK SCREAMED INTO LIFE.
AAAAGH! WHO HAS STARTED UP THE WAR-MACHINE?

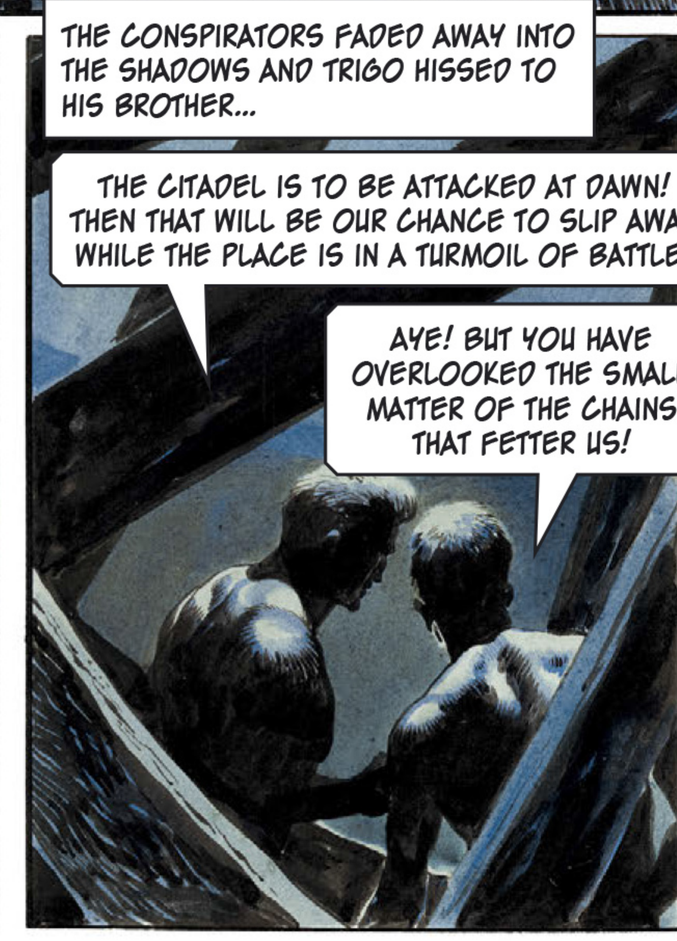

AND THEN THE METAL MONSTER SLID SWIFTLY FORWARD ON ITS CUSHION OF AIR AND SKITTLED THE LOKANS LIKE A ROW OF BROKEN DOLLS.
JANNO AND KEREN WERE DOING WELL... *SO FAR!*

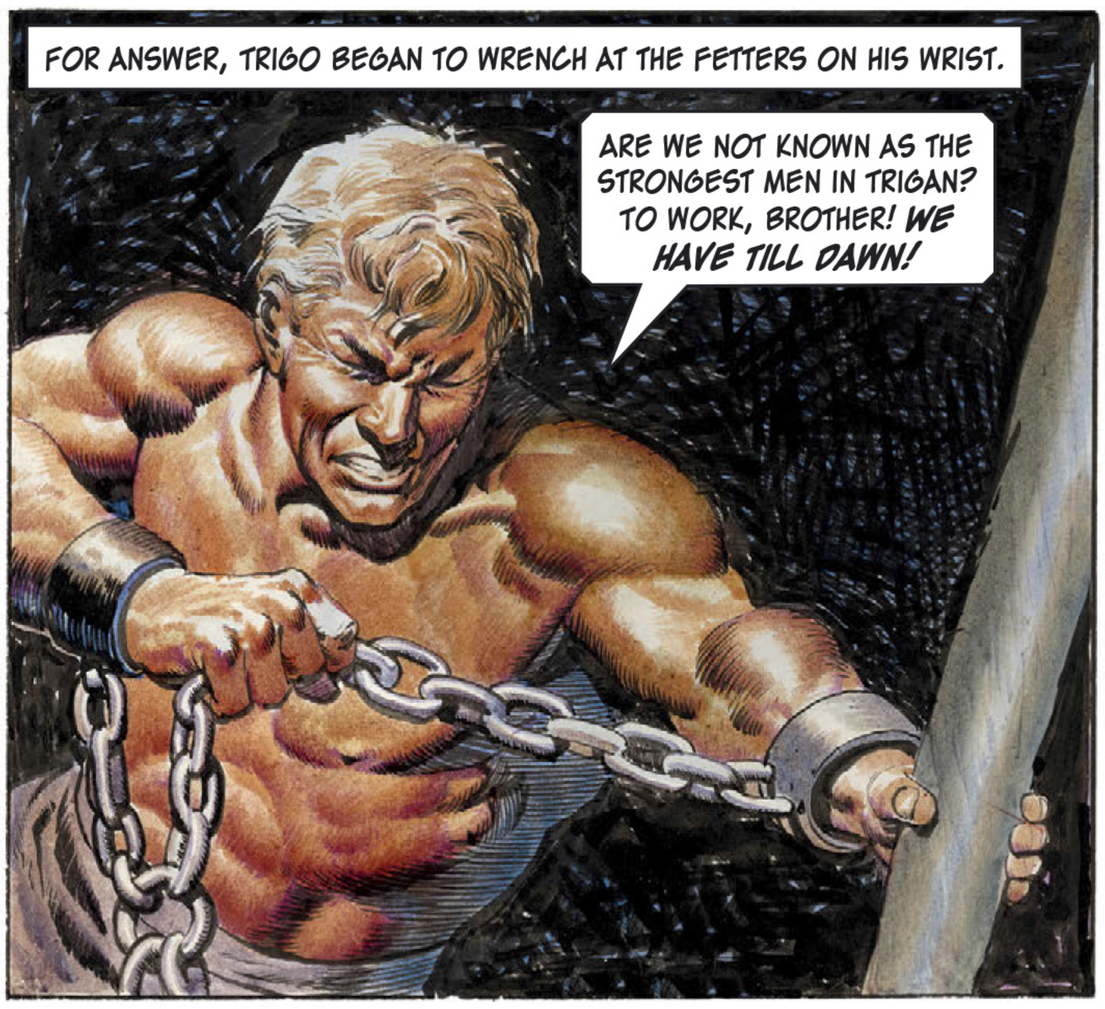

MEANWHILE, IT WAS NOT YET DUSK IN THE FAR-OFF SERES DESERT, WHERE TRIGO AND BRAG LABOURED AS SLAVES IN THE CITADEL OF THE DESERT CHIEF.
WORK, YOU ANIMALS... WORK! IT WANTS ANOTHER HOUR TILL SUNSET. THERE'LL BE NO REST FOR YOU TILL THEN!


WHEN THE SUNS OF ELEKTON HAD DIPPED BELOW THE HORIZON, THEIR TORMENT CEASED. THE OTHER WRETCHED SLAVES SLEPT WHERE THEY FELL... BUT TRIGO AND BRAG HAD MUCH TO TALK ABOUT.
WE MUST ESCAPE!
HUSH! WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE?

DISREGARDING THE SLAVES IN THE WHEEL-WHOM HE THOUGHT TO BE SLEEPING FROM SHEER FATIGUE-THE SLAVE MASTER WAS DEEP IN CONVERSATION WITH TWO WARRIORS.
IT IS SETTLED THEN... AT DAWN I OPEN THE GATES OF THE CITADEL!
...AND OUR MEN WILL SWARM IN AND TAKE THE CITADEL WITH FIRE AND SWORD!

TRIGO AND BRAG HEARD EVERY WORD...
AND WHEN THE CHIEF IS SLAIN, I SHALL BE CHIEF IN HIS PLACE? THAT WAS OUR BARGAIN!
AGREED! ALL WE ASK FOR IS THE LOOT OF THE CITADEL!


THE CONSPIRATORS FADED AWAY INTO THE SHADOWS AND TRIGO HISSED TO HIS BROTHER...
THE CITADEL IS TO BE ATTACKED AT DAWN! THEN THAT WILL BE OUR CHANCE TO SLIP AWAY WHILE THE PLACE IS IN A TURMOIL OF BATTLE!
AYE! BUT YOU HAVE OVERLOOKED THE SMALL MATTER OF THE CHAINS THAT FETTER US!


FOR ANSWER, TRIGO BEGAN TO WRENCH AT THE FETTERS ON HIS WRIST.
ARE WE NOT KNOWN AS THE STRONGEST MEN IN TRIGAN? TO WORK, BROTHER! WE HAVE TILL DAWN!

IT STILL WANTED AN HOUR TILL DAWN WHEN TRIGO FINALLY FREED HIMSELF AND SWUNG OUT OF THE GRIM WHEEL... WHERE HE WAS INSTANTLY CHALLENGED!
A SLAVE HAS ESCAPED... AT HIM!
IT'S NO USE, TRIGO. I CAN'T GET AWAY. LEAVE ME AND SAVE YOURSELF!

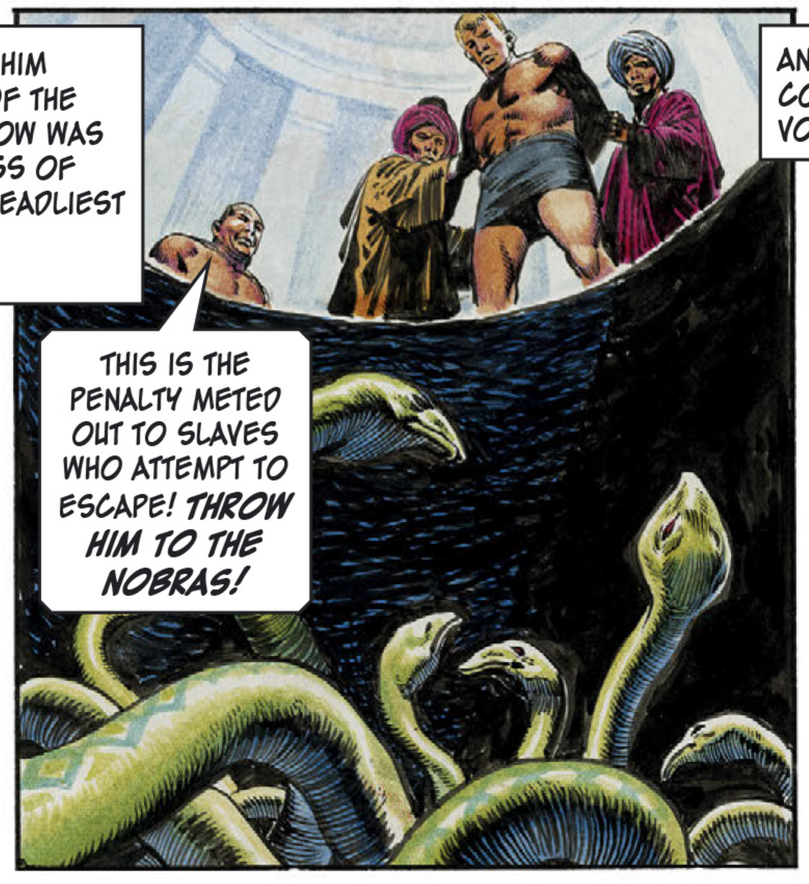
TRIGO STOOD HIS GROUND AND TENSED HIMSELF FOR ACTION AS THE SLAVE MASTER SWUNG HIS SWORD.
DIE, SLAVE!

THE KEEN EDGE NEVER CONNECTED. THE SLAVE MASTER'S ARM WAS TAKEN IN A MIGHTY GRIP AND HE WAS HURLED INTO THE FACES OF HIS COMPANIONS!
AAAAGH!
NOT BY YOUR HAND!

THE OTHERS CLOSED IN. TRIGO FOUGHT MIGHTILY WITH HIS BARE HANDS-BUT THE ODDS WERE HOPELESS. HE WAS BORNE-STILL BATTLING-TO THE GROUND.

THEN HE WAS DRAGGED TO HIS FEET-DAZED AND BRUISED-TO FACE THE FURY OF THE SLAVE MASTER.
WE HAVE A VERY SPECIAL FATE FOR THE LIKES OF YOU... TAKE HIM TO THE GREAT HALL!

TRIGO WAS DRAGGED TO THE GREAT HALL OF THE DESERT CITADEL, WHERE A YAWNING PIT LAY IN THE CENTRE OF THE VAST FLOOR.

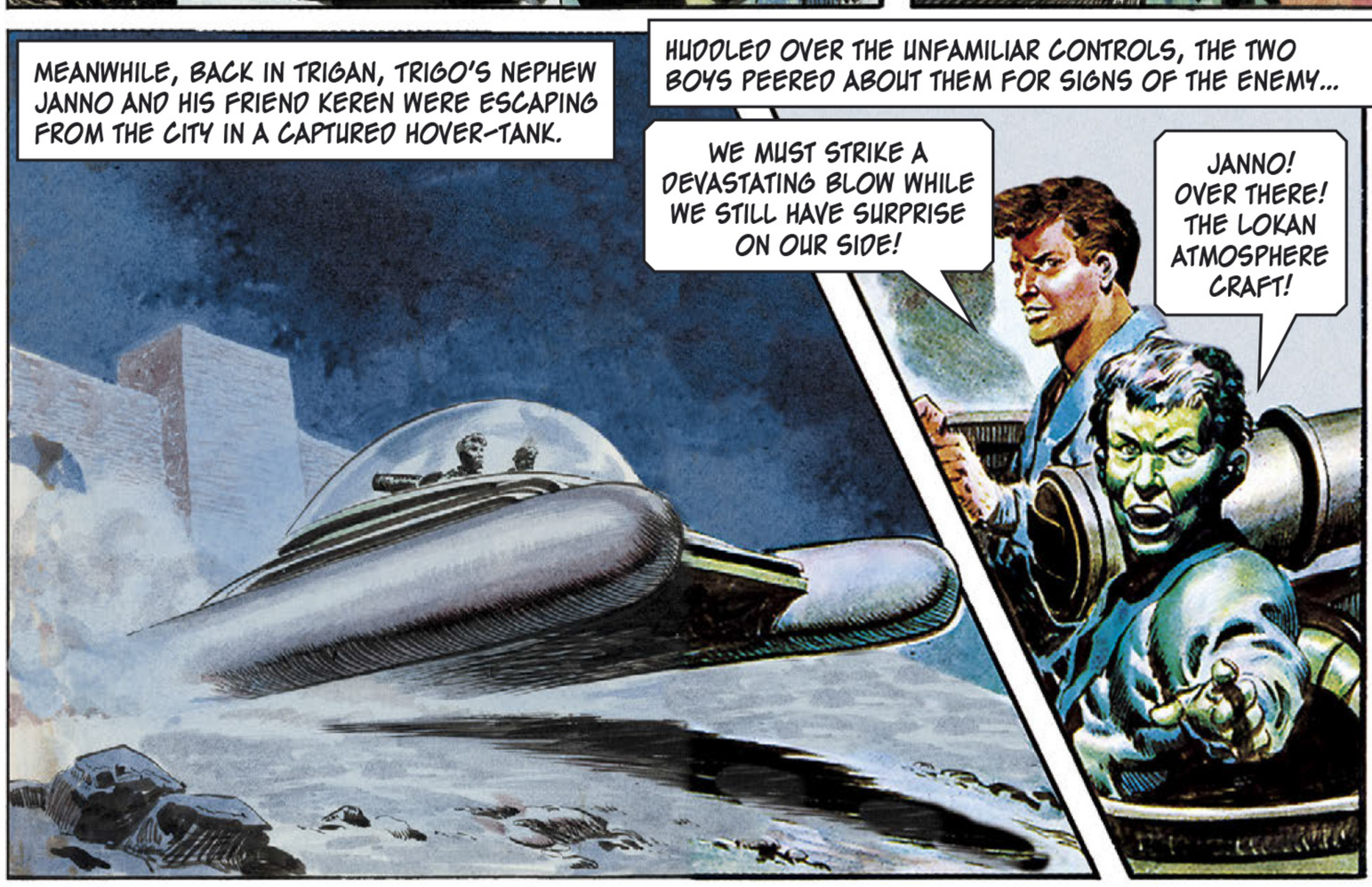

THEY BROUGHT HIM TO THE EDGE OF THE PIT. DOWN BELOW WAS A WRITHING MASS OF NOBRAS, THE DEADLIEST SERPENTS OF ELEKTON.
THIS IS THE PENALTY METED OUT TO SLAVES WHO ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE! THROW HIM TO THE NOBRAS!

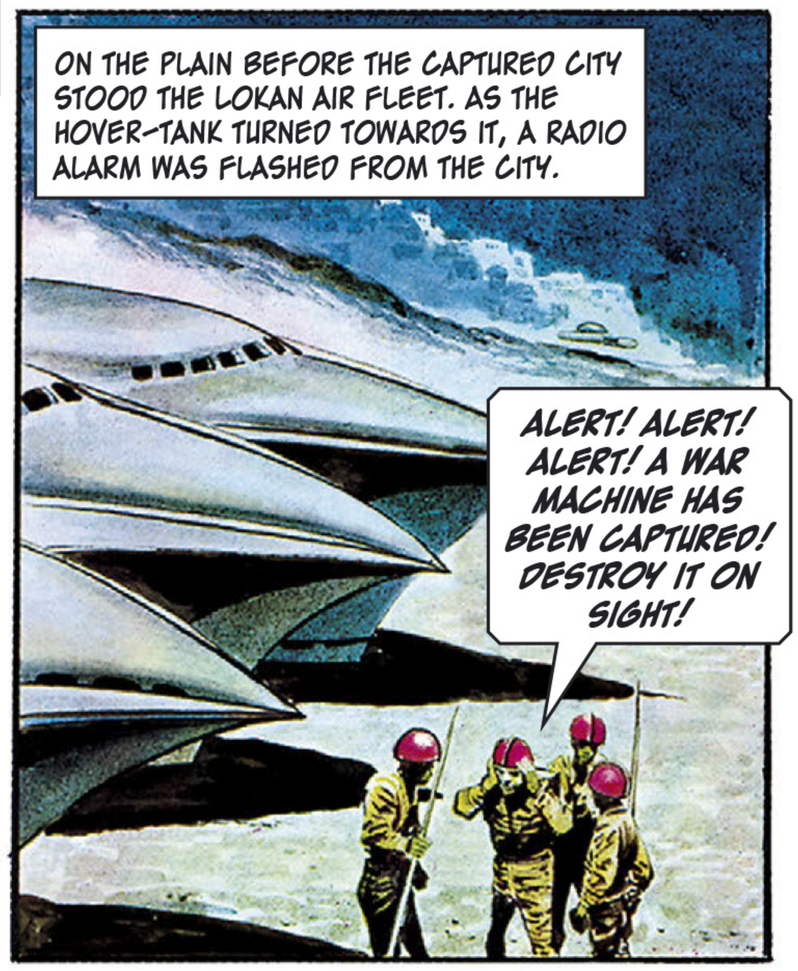
AND THEN... A COMMANDING VOICE!
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

FAWNINGLY, THE SLAVE MASTER KNELT BEFORE THE RICHLY-DRESSED YOUNG MAN.
O MY CHIEF, THIS ANIMAL OF A SLAVE ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE, TREACHEROUSLY ATTACKING ME WHILE MY BACK WAS TURNED. HE RICHLY DESERVES TO DIE!

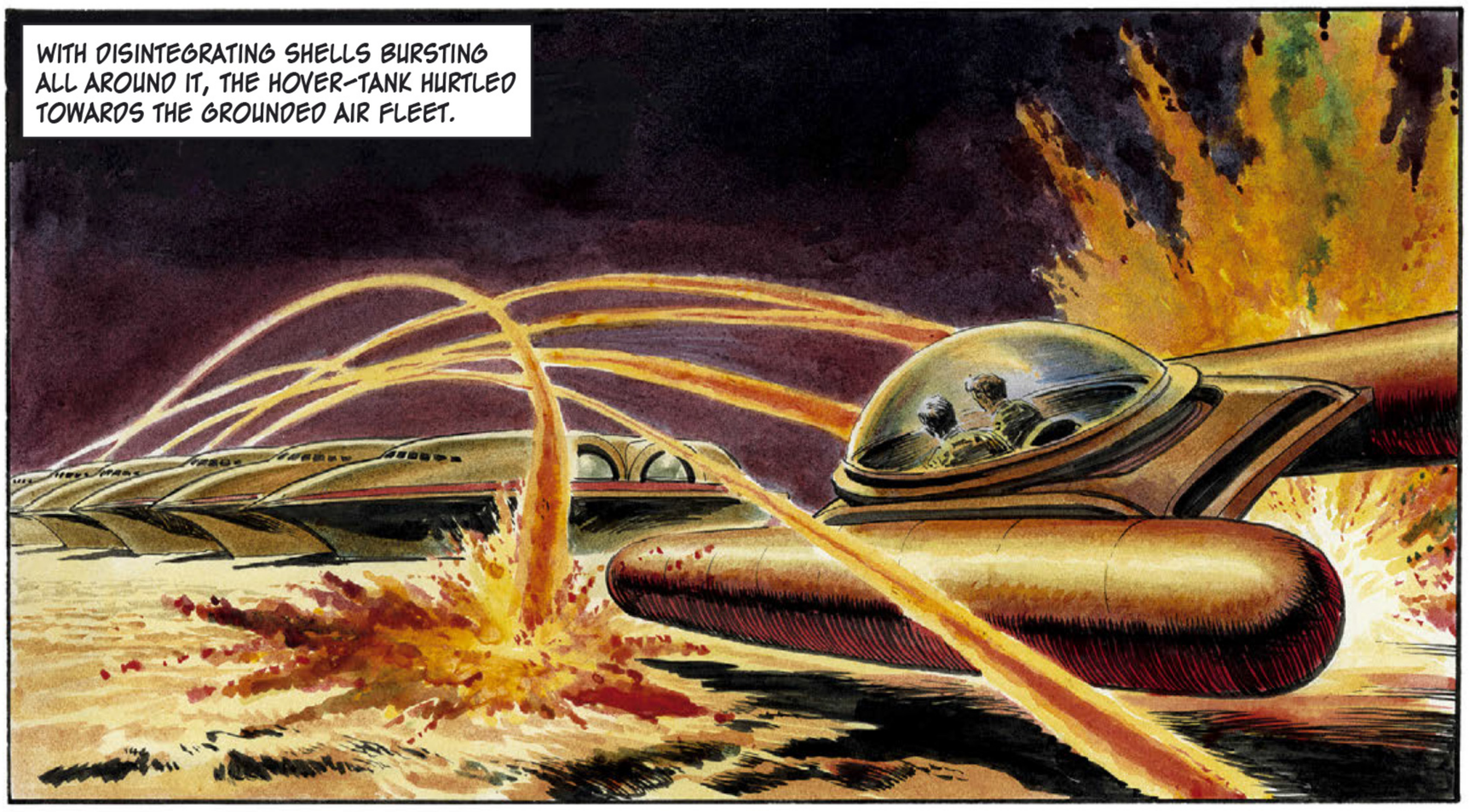
TRIGO REALISED THAT ONLY DESPERATE MEASURES COULD SAVE HIM. HE FACED THE YOUNG CHIEF FEARLESSLY.
THAT IS TRUE! I HOPED TO ESCAPE AT DAWN... WHEN THE TRAITOR OPENS UP THE GATES TO ADMIT THOSE WHO WILL CAPTURE THE CITADEL AND MAKE HIM CHIEF IN YOUR PLACE!
WHAT IS THIS?
HE LIES! HE LIES!

HASTILY, THE TRAITOR'S HENCHMEN DRAGGED TRIGO AGAIN TO THE EDGE OF THE DEADLY PIT.
HURL HIM INTO THE PIT! LET THE NOBRAS SILENCE HIS LYING TONGUE!

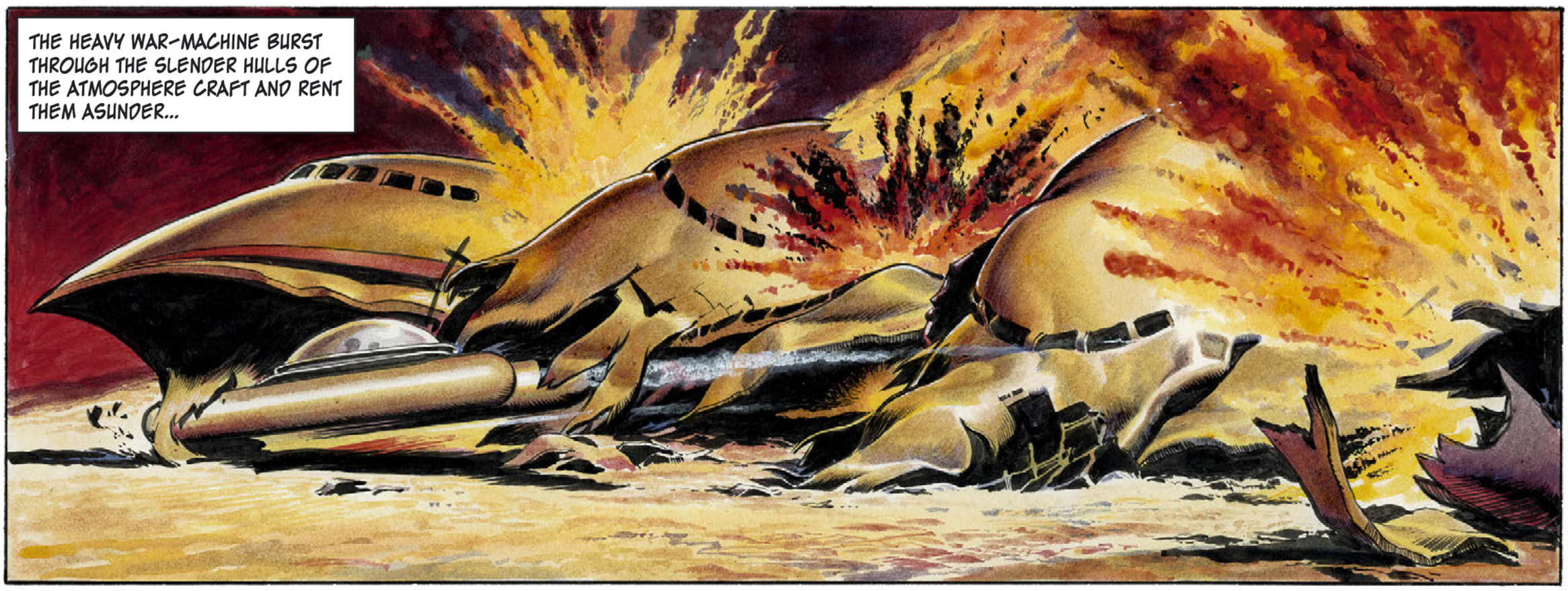

MEANWHILE, BACK IN TRIGAN, TRIGO'S NEPHEW JANNO AND HIS FRIEND KEREN WERE ESCAPING FROM THE CITY IN A CAPTURED HOVER-TANK.
HUDDLED OVER THE UNFAMILIAR CONTROLS, THE TWO BOYS PEERED ABOUT THEM FOR SIGNS OF THE ENEMY...
WE MUST STRIKE A DEVASTATING BLOW WHILE WE STILL HAVE SURPRISE ON OUR SIDE!
JANNO! OVER THERE! THE LOKAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT!


ON THE PLAIN BEFORE THE CAPTURED CITY STOOD THE LOKAN AIR FLEET. AS THE HOVER-TANK TURNED TOWARDS IT, A RADIO ALARM WAS FLASHED FROM THE CITY.
ALERT! ALERT! ALERT! A WAR MACHINE HAS BEEN CAPTURED! DESTROY IT ON SIGHT!

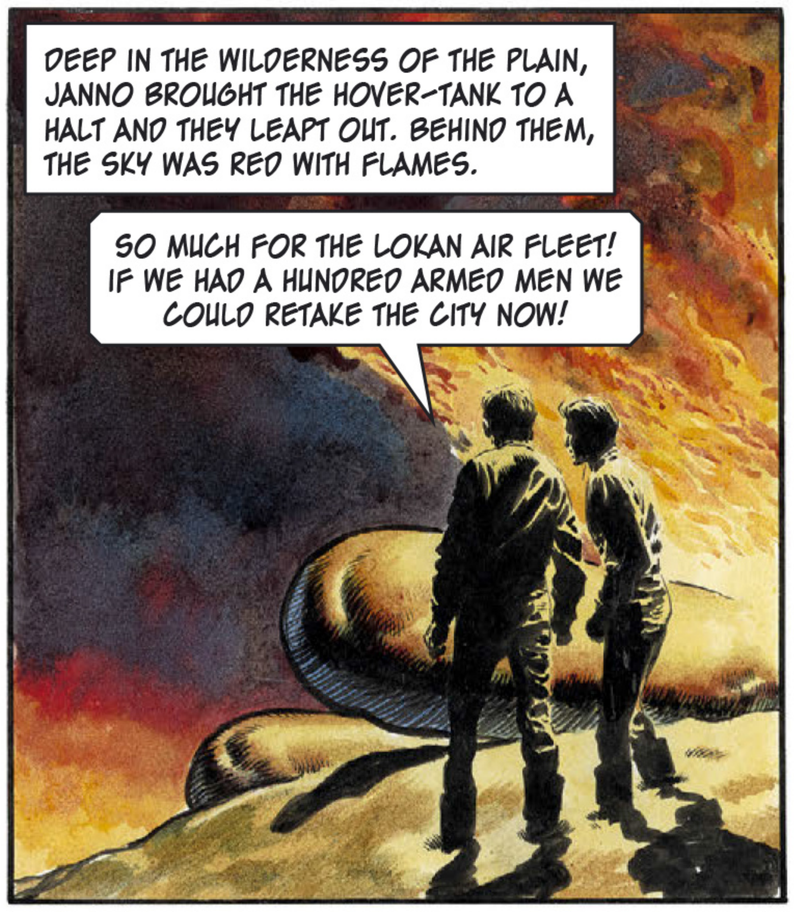
AS JANNO STEERED THE HEAVY MACHINE FOR THE FLEET WITH THE OBJECT OF PLOUGHING IT INTO SCRAP METAL, THE GUNS OF THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT OPENED UP ON THEM.
KEEP GOING, JANNO! KEEP GOING... NO MATTER WHAT!


WITH DISINTEGRATING SHELLS BURSTING ALL AROUND IT, THE HOVER-TANK HURTLED TOWARDS THE GROUNDED AIR FLEET.

AN INSTANT BEFORE IMPACT, JANNO CALLED OUT TO HIS FRIEND.
BRACE YOURSELF FOR THE CRASH, KEREN!


THE HEAVY WAR-MACHINE BURST THROUGH THE SLENDER HULLS OF THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT AND RENT THEM ASUNDER...

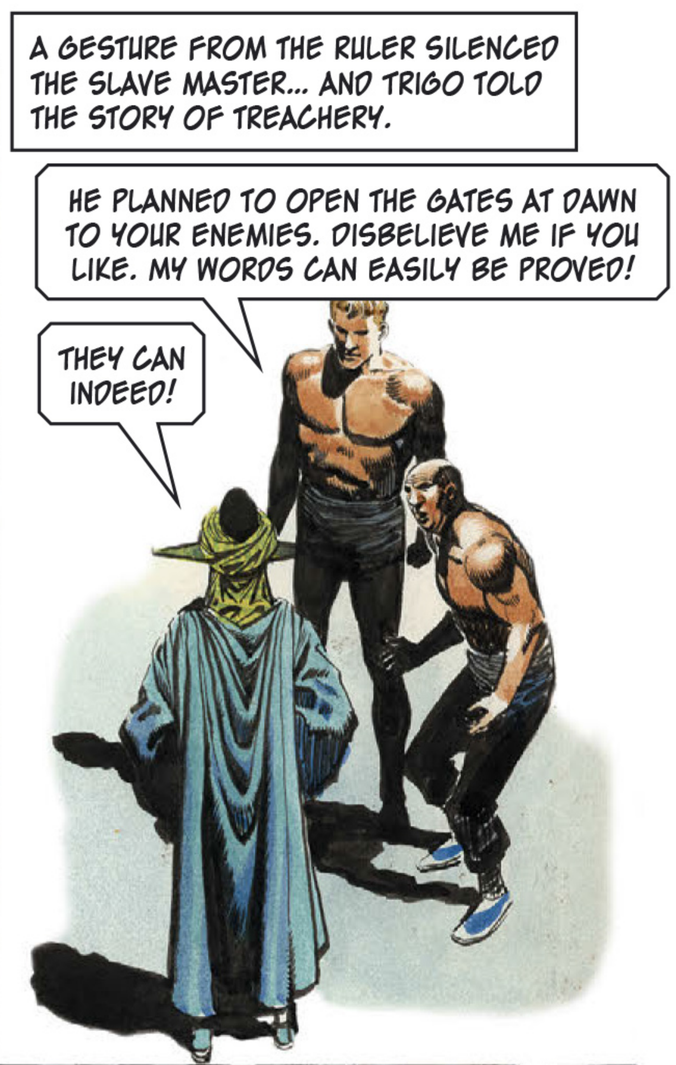
...AND THEN WENT ON ITS WAY, TRAILING A FLAMING TAIL!
WE'RE ON FIRE, KEREN!
KEEP GOING, JANNO... KEEP GOING!

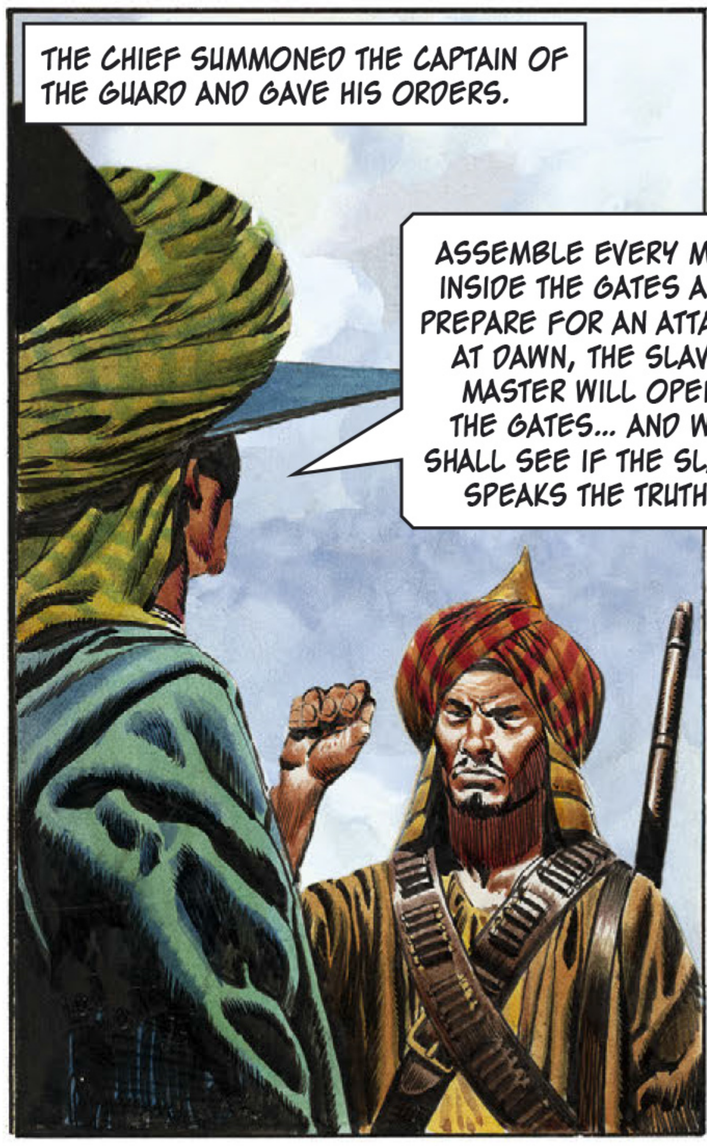

DEEP IN THE WILDERNESS OF THE PLAIN, JANNO BROUGHT THE HOVER-TANK TO A HALT AND THEY LEAPT OUT. BEHIND THEM, THE SKY WAS RED WITH FLAMES.
SO MUCH FOR THE LOKAN AIR FLEET! IF WE HAD A HUNDRED ARMED MEN WE COULD RETAKE THE CITY NOW!

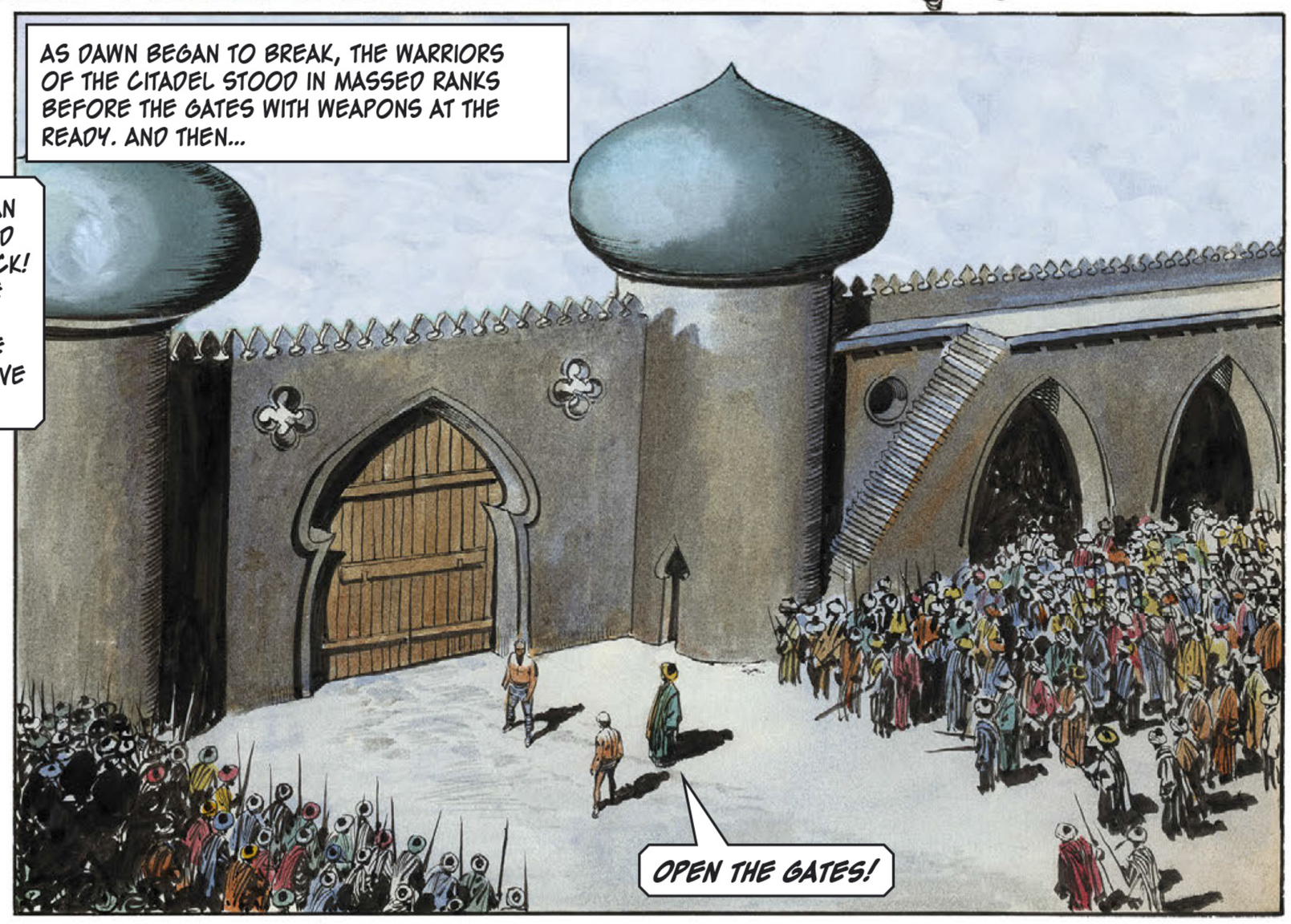
BUT WHERE WOULD WE GET SUCH A FORCE OF WARRIORS? ALL OUR PEOPLE ARE ENSLAVED AND WE ARE LEADERLESS!
IF ONLY MY UNCLE TRIGO WERE HERE!

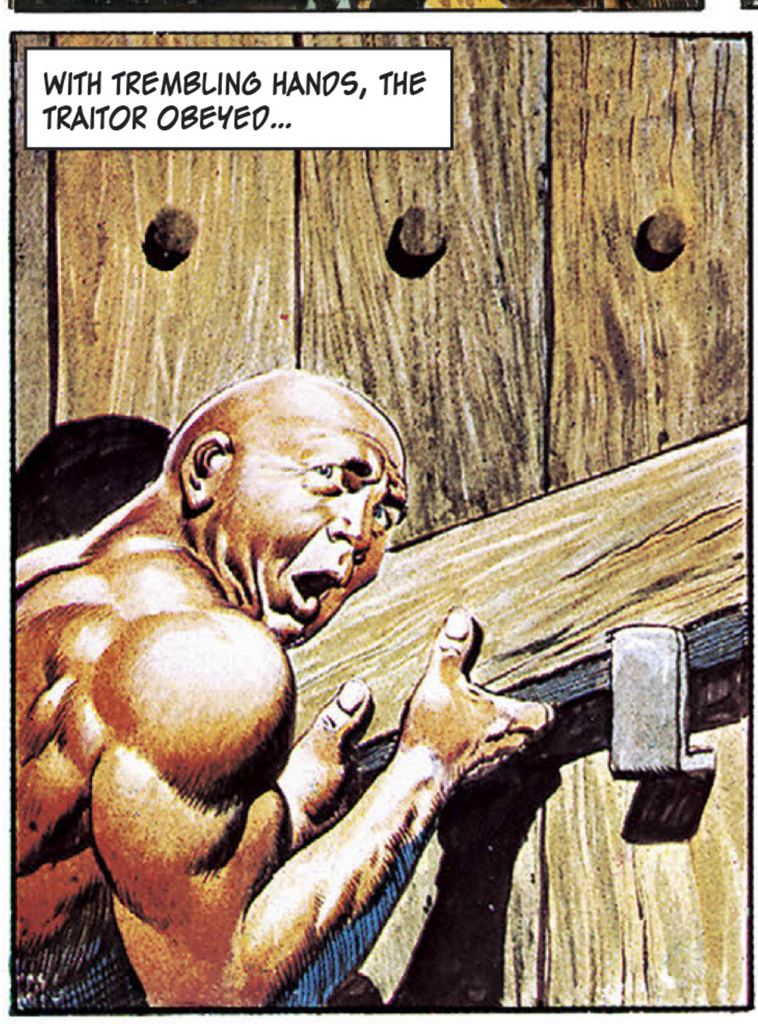
FAR OFF, IN THE DESERT CITADEL, TRIGO WAS IN DEADLY PERIL. JUST AS HE WAS ABOUT TO BE THROWN INTO A PIT OF DEADLY SERPENTS, THE CHIEF OF THE CITADEL SNAPPED AN ORDER.
STOP! LET HIM LIVE! I WISH TO HEAR MORE OF WHAT HE HAS TO SAY!

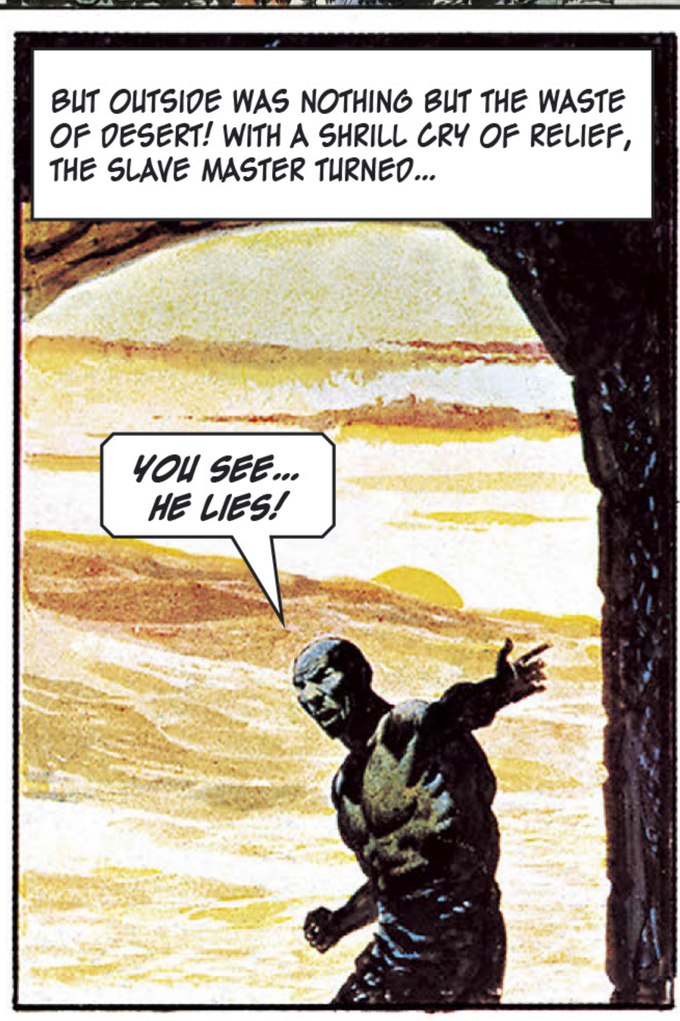
AS TRIGO FACED THE CHIEF, FEARLESSLY, THE RASCALLY SLAVE MASTER BEGAN TO BLUSTER...
YOU SAY THAT MY SLAVE MASTER PLANS TO BETRAY ME?
YES!
LIES, ALL LIES! WHO LISTENS TO THE WORD OF A SLAVE...?

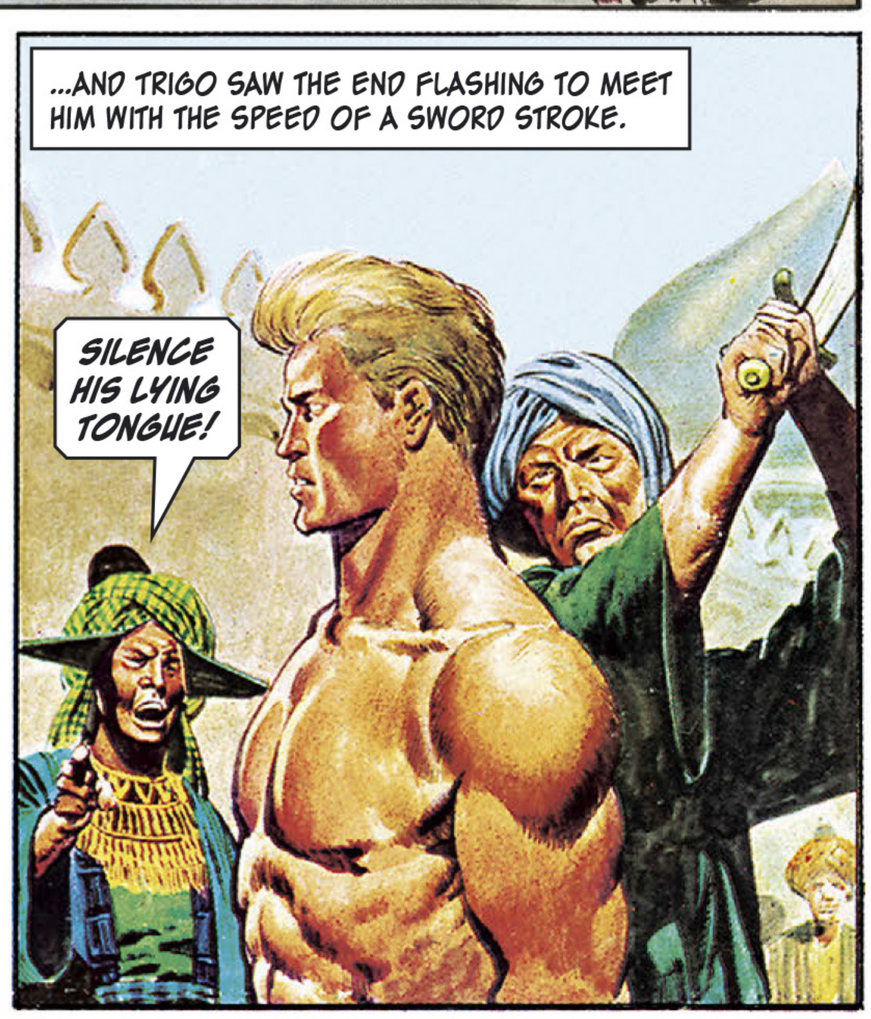

A GESTURE FROM THE RULER SILENCED THE SLAVE MASTER... AND TRIGO TOLD THE STORY OF TREACHERY.
HE PLANNED TO OPEN THE GATES AT DAWN TO YOUR ENEMIES. DISBELIEVE ME IF YOU LIKE. MY WORDS CAN EASILY BE PROVED!
THEY CAN INDEED!

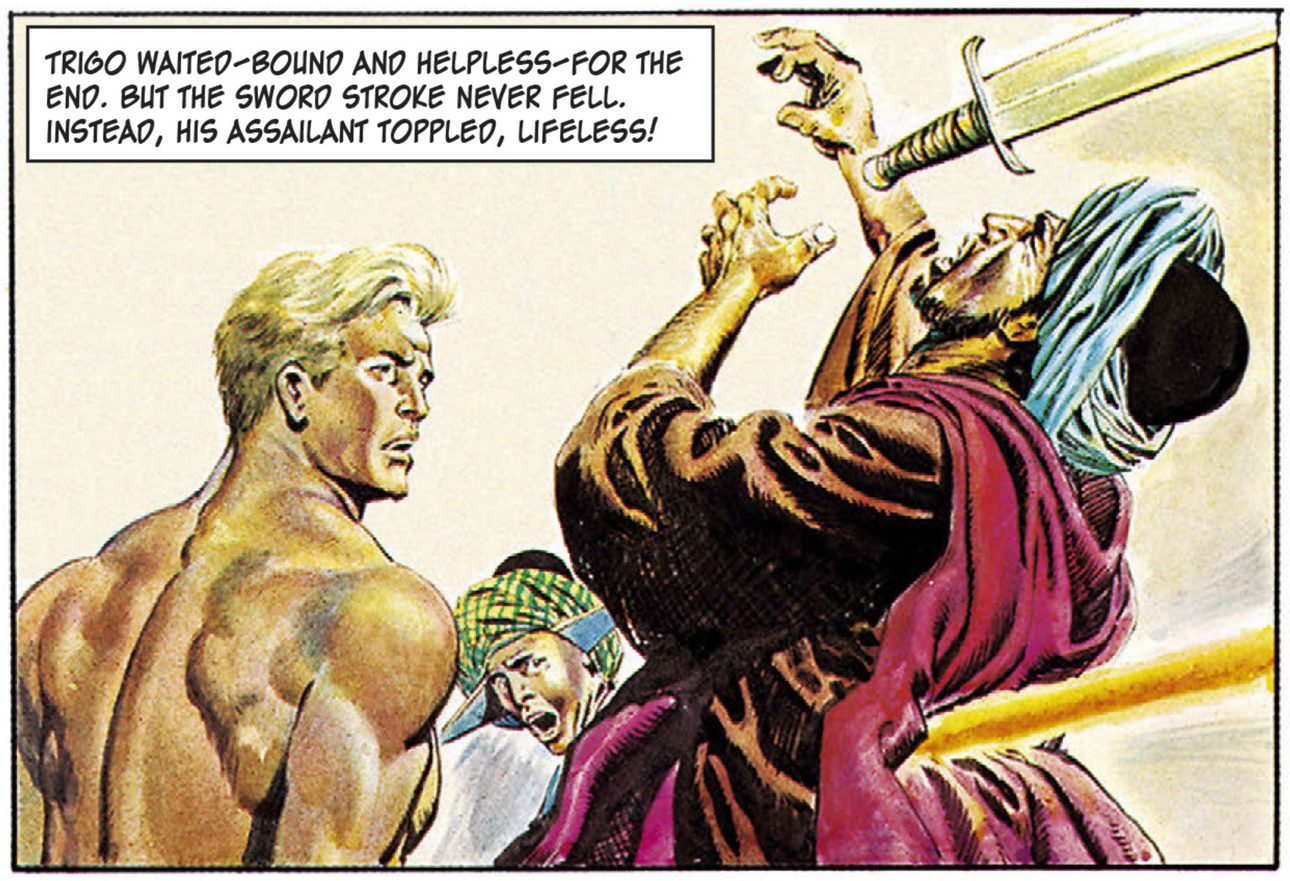

THE CHIEF SUMMONED THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD AND GAVE HIS ORDERS.
ASSEMBLE EVERY MAN INSIDE THE GATES AND PREPARE FOR AN ATTACK! AT DAWN, THE SLAVE MASTER WILL OPEN THE GATES... AND WE SHALL SEE IF THE SLAVE SPEAKS THE TRUTH!


AS DAWN BEGAN TO BREAK, THE WARRIORS OF THE CITADEL STOOD IN MASSED RANKS BEFORE THE GATES WITH WEAPONS AT THE READY. AND THEN...
OPEN THE GATES!


WITH TREMBLING HANDS, THE TRAITOR OBEYED...


BUT OUTSIDE WAS NOTHING BUT THE WASTE OF DESERT! WITH A SHRILL CRY OF RELIEF, THE SLAVE MASTER TURNED...
YOU SEE... HE LIES!


...AND TRIGO SAW THE END FLASHING TO MEET HIM WITH THE SPEED OF A SWORD STROKE.
SILENCE HIS LYING TONGUE!


TRIGO WAITED-BOUND AND HELPLESS-FOR THE END. BUT THE SWORD STROKE NEVER FELL. INSTEAD, HIS ASSAILANT TOPPLED, LIFELESS!

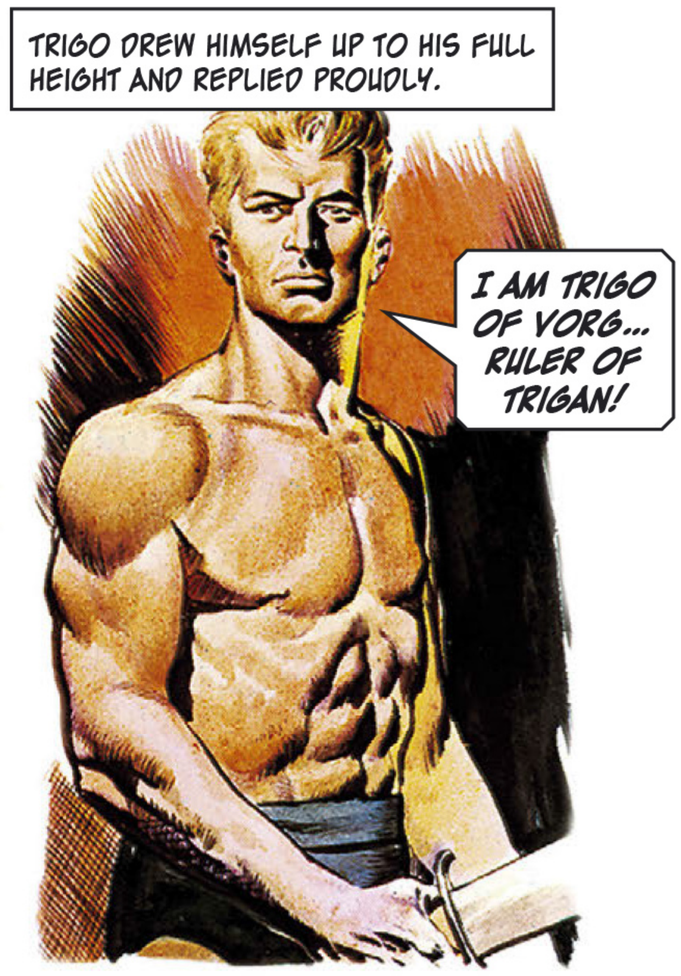
NEXT INSTANT, A HOST OF ARMED WARRIORS ROSE FROM THE DESERT OUTSIDE THE GATE, WHERE THEY HAD BEEN HIDING UNDER SAND-COLOURED CLOAKS!
ARISE! CHARGE!

IN THROUGH THE OPEN GATES CHARGED THE ATTACKERS, WHERE THEY WERE MET BY A WITHERING HAIL OF FIRE FROM THE DEFENDERS OF THE CITADEL.

IN THE SAVAGE, HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING THAT FOLLOWED, THE CHIEF OF THE CITADEL SLASHED THROUGH TRIGO'S BONDS WITH HIS OWN BLADE.
FIND YOURSELF A SWORD, SLAVE... AND FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE!

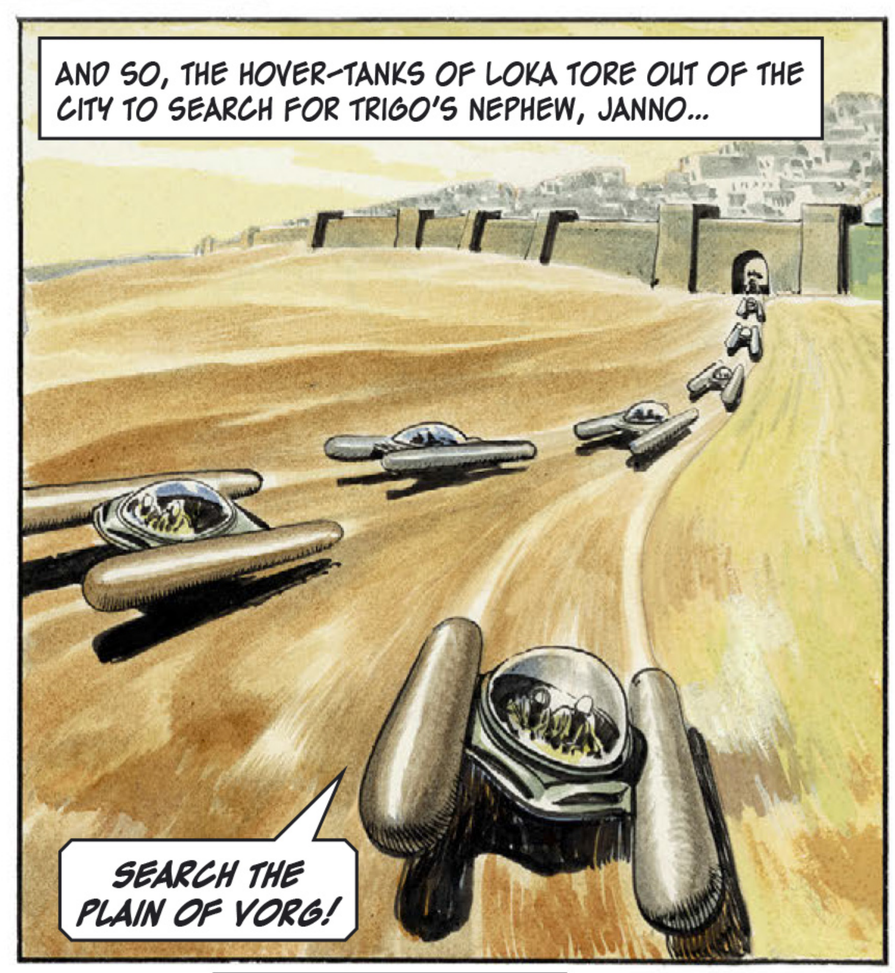
SNATCHING UP A FALLEN WEAPON, TRIGO JOINED THE BATTLE-AND IT WAS HE WHO LED THE LAST GLORIOUS CHARGE THAT DROVE THE BEATEN ATTACKERS OUT OF THE GATES!

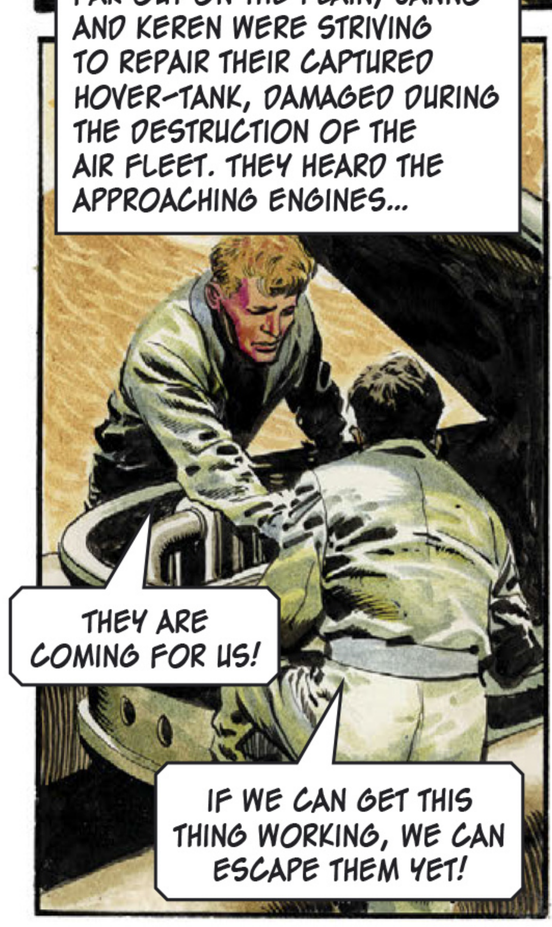
SOON IT WAS ALL OVER. PANTING, THE CHIEF LOWERED HIS SWORD AND STARED KEENLY AT HIS STRANGE 'SLAVE'...
YOU HAVE SAVED THE CITADEL. YOU ARE NO ORDINARY SLAVE...

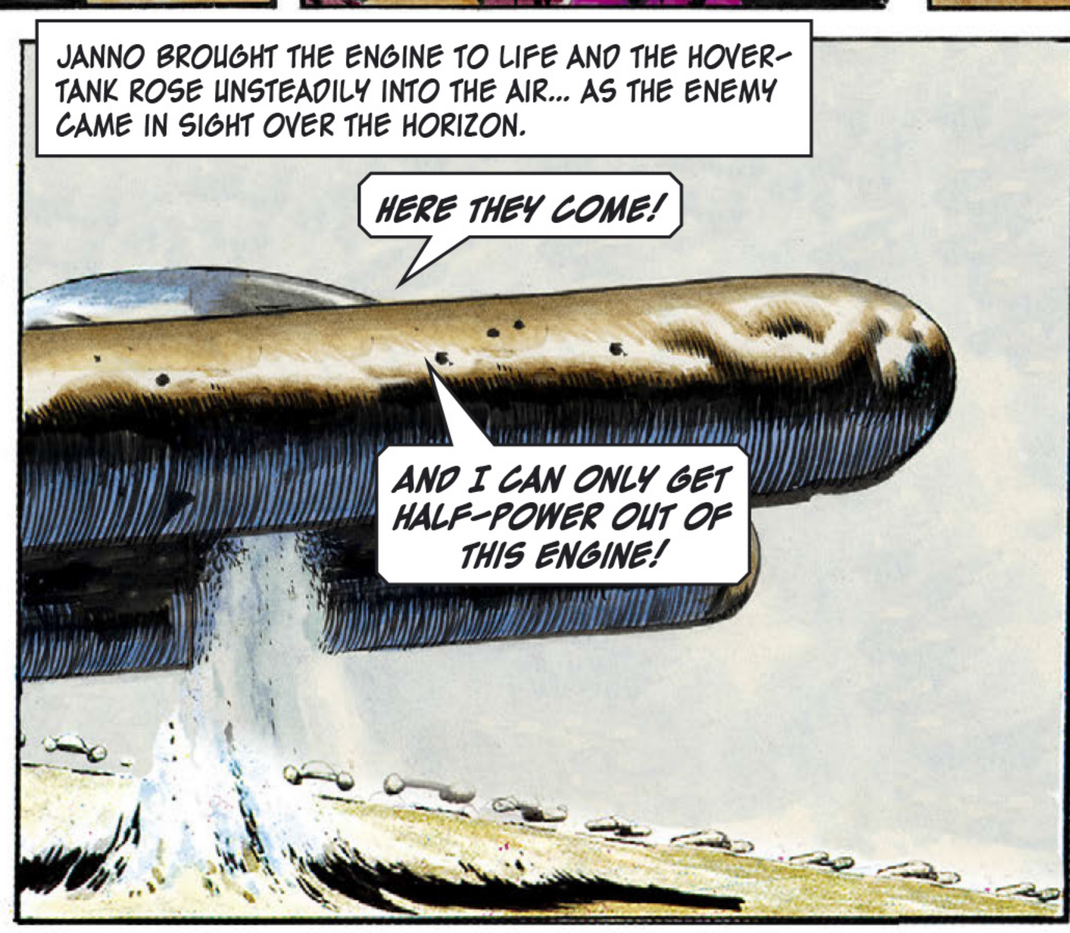

TRIGO DREW HIMSELF UP TO HIS FULL HEIGHT AND REPLIED PROUDLY.
I AM TRIGO OF VORG... RULER OF TRIGAN!

MEANWHILE—AT TRIGAN—THE TYRANT KING ZORTH OF LOKA WAS STARING IN FURY AT THE TANGLED MASS OF WRECKAGE THAT HAD ONCE BEEN HIS PROUD AIR FLEET.
BY THE PLANETS, SOMEONE WILL PAY DEARLY FOR THIS! GIVE THE ORDER FOR EVERY TENTH MAN IN THE AIR FLEET TO BE ELIMINATED FOR ALLOWING IT TO HAPPEN!

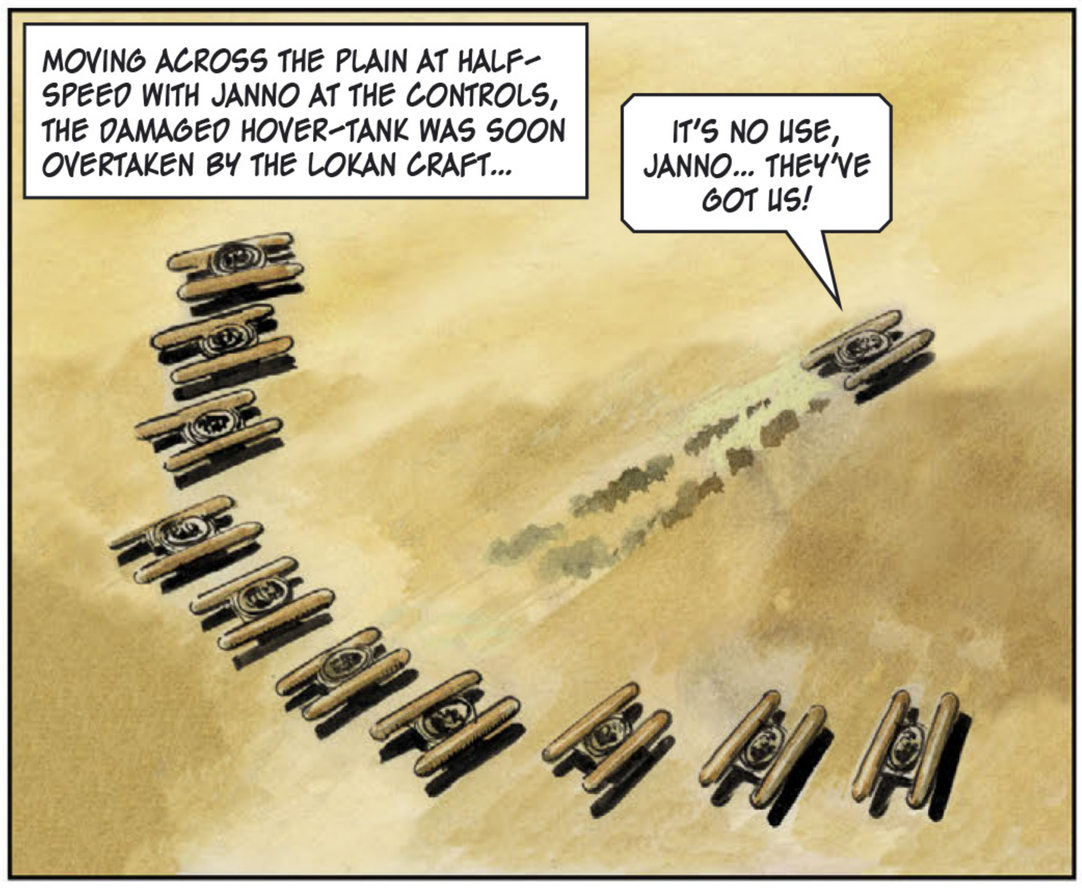
ONE OF ZORTH'S OFFICERS FOUND COURAGE TO SPEAK.
ALL HIGHEST... TRIGO'S NEPHEW ESCAPED, STOLE A WAR-MACHINE AND CAUSED THE DESTRUCTION...
THEN WHY HAS TRIGO'S NEPHEW NOT BEEN RECAPTURED, DOLT! FIND HIM, CURSE YOU, AND BRING HIM TO ME! ALIVE!


AND SO, THE HOVER-TANKS OF LOKA TORE OUT OF THE CITY TO SEARCH FOR TRIGO'S NEPHEW, JANNO...
SEARCH THE PLAIN OF VORG!

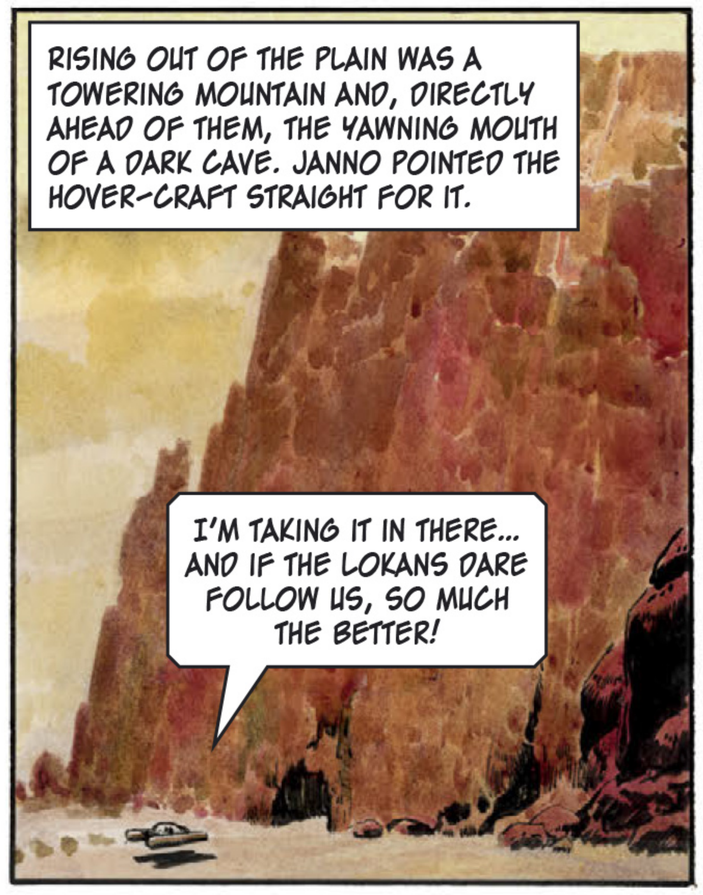

FAR OUT ON THE PLAIN, JANNO AND KEREN WERE STRIVING TO REPAIR THEIR CAPTURED HOVER-TANK, DAMAGED DURING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AIR FLEET. THEY HEARD THE APPROACHING ENGINES...
THEY ARE COMING FOR US!
IF WE CAN GET THIS THING WORKING, WE CAN ESCAPE THEM YET!


JANNO BROUGHT THE ENGINE TO LIFE AND THE HOVER-TANK ROSE UNSTEADILY INTO THE AIR... AS THE ENEMY CAME IN SIGHT OVER THE HORIZON.
HERE THEY COME!
AND I CAN ONLY GET HALF-POWER OUT OF THIS ENGINE!

THE COMMANDER OF THE LOKAN FORCE SAW THE FUGITIVES...
SHALL I OPEN FIRE, COMMANDER?
NO, THEY ARE TO BE TAKEN ALIVE. THE ALL HIGHEST HAS HIS OWN SPECIAL PLANS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF TRIGO'S NEPHEW!


MOVING ACROSS THE PLAIN AT HALF-SPEED WITH JANNO AT THE CONTROLS, THE DAMAGED HOVER-TANK WAS SOON OVERTAKEN BY THE LOKAN CRAFT...
IT'S NO USE, JANNO... THEY'VE GOT US!

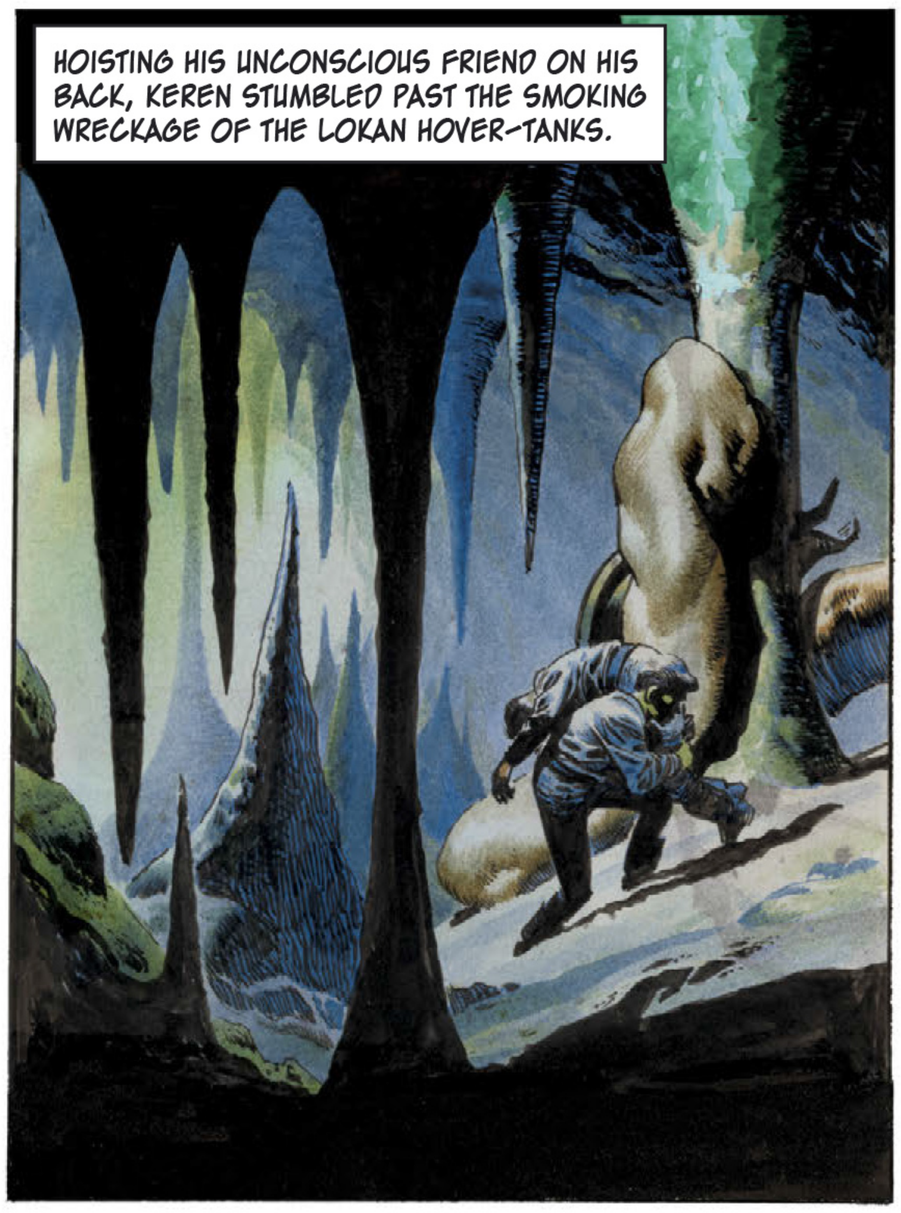
DISREGARDING HIS COMRADE KEREN'S DESPAIRING REMARK, JANNO GAZED FIXEDLY AHEAD -AND SUDDENLY HIS EYES WIDENED.
KEREN! THE ROCK WALL AHEAD! DO YOU SEE THAT CAVE MOUTH?
JANNO... YOU WOULDN'T DARE!


RISING OUT OF THE PLAIN WAS A TOWERING MOUNTAIN AND, DIRECTLY AHEAD OF THEM, THE YAWNING MOUTH OF A DARK CAVE. JANNO POINTED THE HOVER-CRAFT STRAIGHT FOR IT.
I'M TAKING IT IN THERE... AND IF THE LOKANS DARE FOLLOW US, SO MUCH THE BETTER!

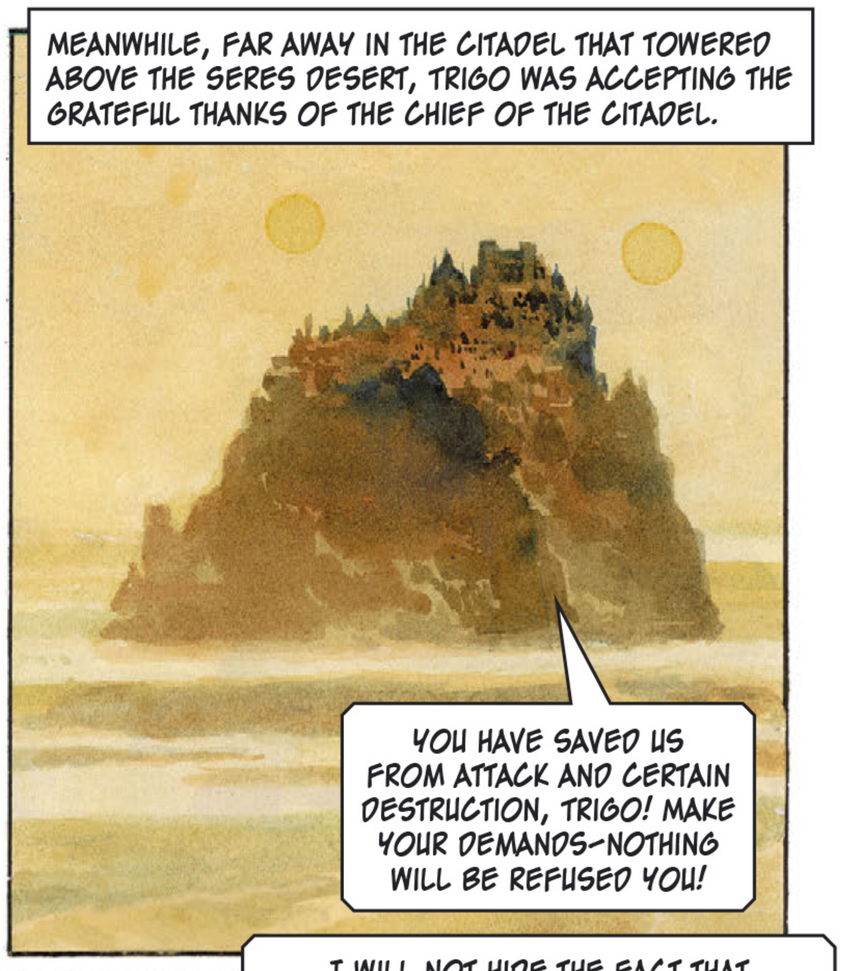
THEY BURST FROM SUNLIGHT TO GLOOM WITHIN THE DARK CAVERN... AND THEIR HURTLING CRAFT SMASHED ITSELF SICKENINGLY AGAINST A STALACTITE AS OLD AS TIME ITSELF!

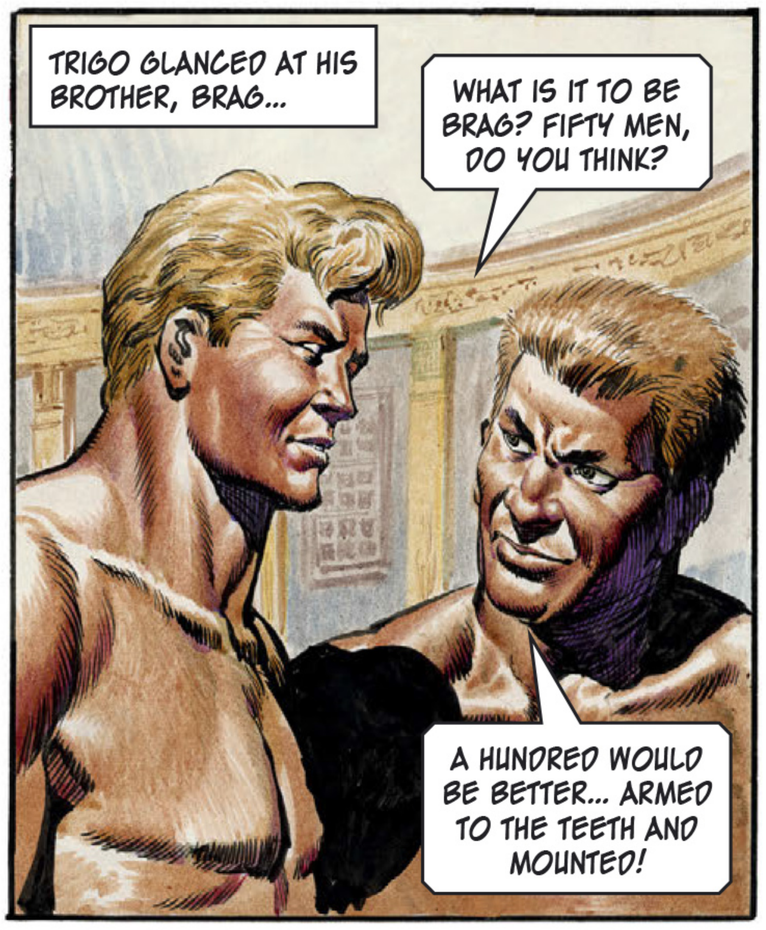
THE SAVAGE, FEARLESS LOKANS FOLLOWED THEIR QUARRY INTO THE UNKNOWN WITHOUT HESITATION-AND DISASTER BEFELL THEM! ONE BY ONE, THE WAR-MACHINES OF LOKA WERE TORN AND RIVEN ASUNDER.

ALL WAS QUIET. LATER, WHEN KEREN RAISED HIS ACHING HEAD AND SOUGHT FOR HIS COMRADE...
JANNO...?


HOISTING HIS UNCONSCIOUS FRIEND ON HIS BACK, KEREN STUMBLED PAST THE SMOKING WRECKAGE OF THE LOKAN HOVER-TANKS.

AND THEN...


MEANWHILE, FAR AWAY IN THE CITADEL THAT TOWERED ABOVE THE SERES DESERT, TRIGO WAS ACCEPTING THE GRATEFUL THANKS OF THE CHIEF OF THE CITADEL.
YOU HAVE SAVED US FROM ATTACK AND CERTAIN DESTRUCTION, TRIGO! MAKE YOUR DEMANDS-NOTHING WILL BE REFUSED YOU!


TRIGO GLANCED AT HIS BROTHER, BRAG...
WHAT IS IT TO BE BRAG? FIFTY MEN, DO YOU THINK?
A HUNDRED WOULD BE BETTER... ARMED TO THE TEETH AND MOUNTED!

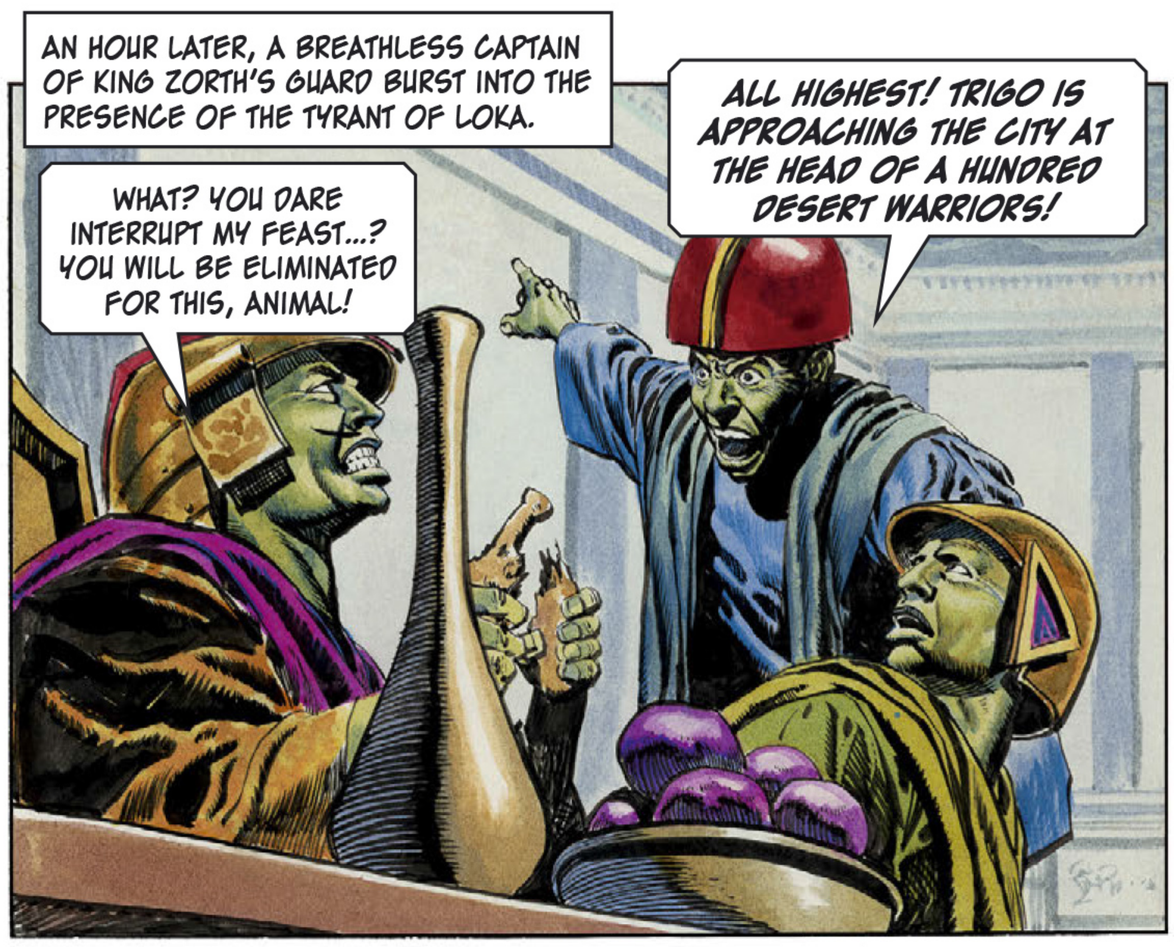
...AND THEN TURNED TO THE CHIEF.
LEND ME A HUNDRED MEN, ARMED AND MOUNTED, TO RIDE TO TRIGAN AND GIVE BATTLE AGAINST THE LOKANS!

THE CHIEF KEPT HIS PROMISE.
I WILL NOT HIDE THE FACT THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO FIGHT AGAINST WAR-MACHINES... BUT I WILL SPARE THEM FROM MASSACRE IF I CAN!
THEY WILL BE HAPPY TO DIE AT YOUR SIDE, TRIGO. SEE TO IT!
YES, MY CHIEF!

AND SO, THAT EVENING, TRIGO AND BRAG RODE OUT FROM THE CITADEL AT THE HEAD OF A BARBARIC HORDE OF DESERT WARRIORS FOR THE LONG JOURNEY TO TRIGAN.

ON US... WE FEW... HANGS THE FATE OF MY PEOPLE!

AS THE GIANT CENTIPEDE ARCHED ITS VAST LENGTH TO STRIKE, KEREN'S HAND SCRABBLED DESPERATELY FOR A PISTOL THAT HAD FALLEN FROM A WOUNDED LOKAN.
HE PRESSED THE TRIGGER... AND THE MONSTER WAS INSTANTLY BATHED IN THE LURID LIGHT OF THE DISINTEGRATOR FLAME.
SOME HOURS LATER, JANNO RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE SUNLIGHT AND KEREN WAS POINTING ACROSS THE PLAIN TO THE DISTANT CITY OF TRIGAN.
WELL, JANNO, WE HAVE DESTROYED THE ENEMY AIR FLEET AND THEIR WAR-MACHINES. BUT WE CAN DO NO MORE TO HELP TRIGAN, LYING THERE UNDER THE TYRANT'S HEEL!
JANNO'S EYES CLOUDED WITH DESPAIR.
IF ONLY MY UNCLE TRIGO WERE HERE... HE WOULD THINK OF SOME WAY TO DRIVE OUT THE LOKANS!
FOR THE NEXT 40 DAYS, THE TWO BOYS LIVED ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE, HUNTING FOR THEIR FOOD AND HIDING FROM LOKAN PATROLS. ON THE 41ST DAY, JANNO'S EXCITED CRIES BROUGHT HIS FRIEND RUNNING.
KEREN! COME QUICKLY! LOOK!
WHAT IS IT?
THEY CAME OUT OF THE VASTNESS OF THE EMPTY PLAIN... A HUNDRED MOUNTED DESERT WARRIORS IN ALL THEIR BARBARIC SPLENDOUR, WITH TRIGO AND HIS BROTHER BRAG AT THEIR HEAD!
JANNO AND KEREN RUSHED TO MEET THEM AND WHEN KEREN EXPLAINED WHAT HAD HAPPENED, TRIGO DREW HIS GLEAMING BLADE.
THEIR AIR FLEET IS DESTROYED, UNCLE, AND ALL THEIR WAR-MACHINES!
THEN IT WILL BE COLD STEEL AND MUSCLE THAT WILL FREE THE CITY OF TRIGAN! ARE YOU READY, MY WARRIORS?


AN HOUR LATER, A BREATHLESS CAPTAIN OF KING ZORTH'S GUARD BURST INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE TYRANT OF LOKA.
WHAT? YOU DARE INTERRUPT MY FEAST...? YOU WILL BE ELIMINATED FOR THIS, ANIMAL!
ALL HIGHEST! TRIGO IS APPROACHING THE CITY AT THE HEAD OF A HUNDRED DESERT WARRIORS!

KING ZORTH ROSE IN TOWERING FURY.
BY ALL THE PLANETS! SUMMON MY CAVALRY! ZORTH OF LOKA HIMSELF WILL LEAD THEM TO BATTLE!

ON THE PLAIN BEFORE HIS BELOVED CITY, TRIGO WHEELED HIS WARRIORS INTO LINE AND CHARGED THE ENEMY...
FOR TRIGAN... AND FREEDOM!

...AND KING ZORTH'S CAVALRY SURGED FORWARD TO MEET SHOCK WITH SHOCK.
DEATH TO TRIGO!

TRIGO'S MOUNT WAS KILLED UNDER HIM... AND TRIGAN'S LAST HOPE FELL HEAVILY TO THE GROUND!
AAAAGH!

HE ROLLED OVER... IN TIME TO SEE THE YELLING FACE OF A LOKAN WARRIOR BEHIND THE GLEAMING POINT OF HIS ONCOMING LANCE!
YAAAAAAAAGH!

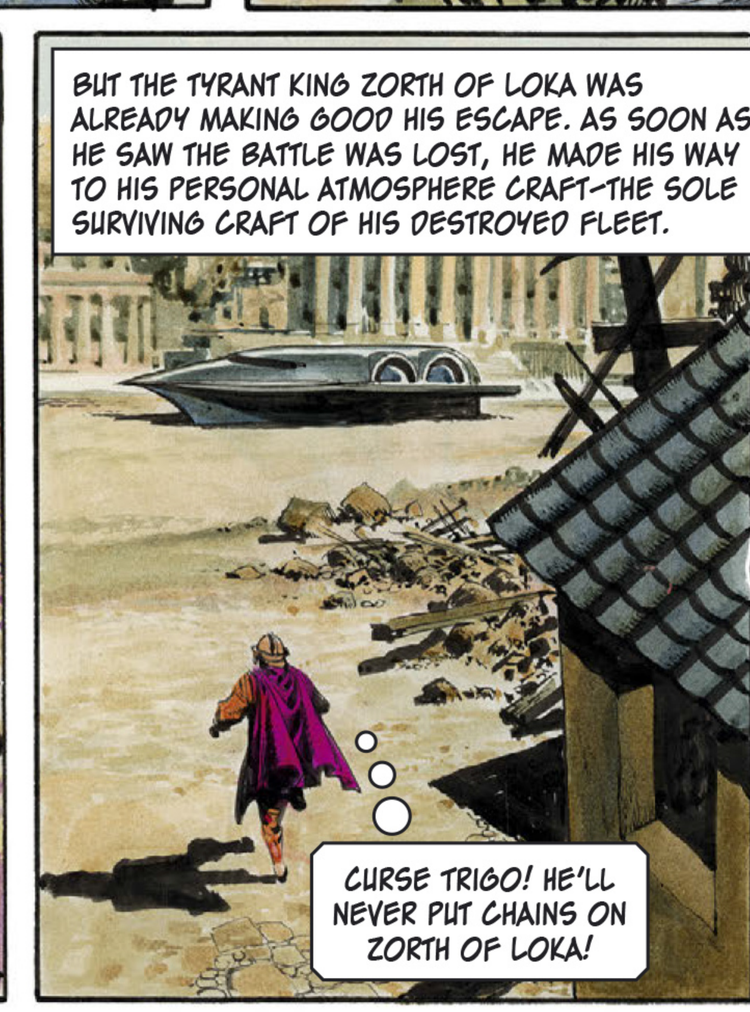
DIE!

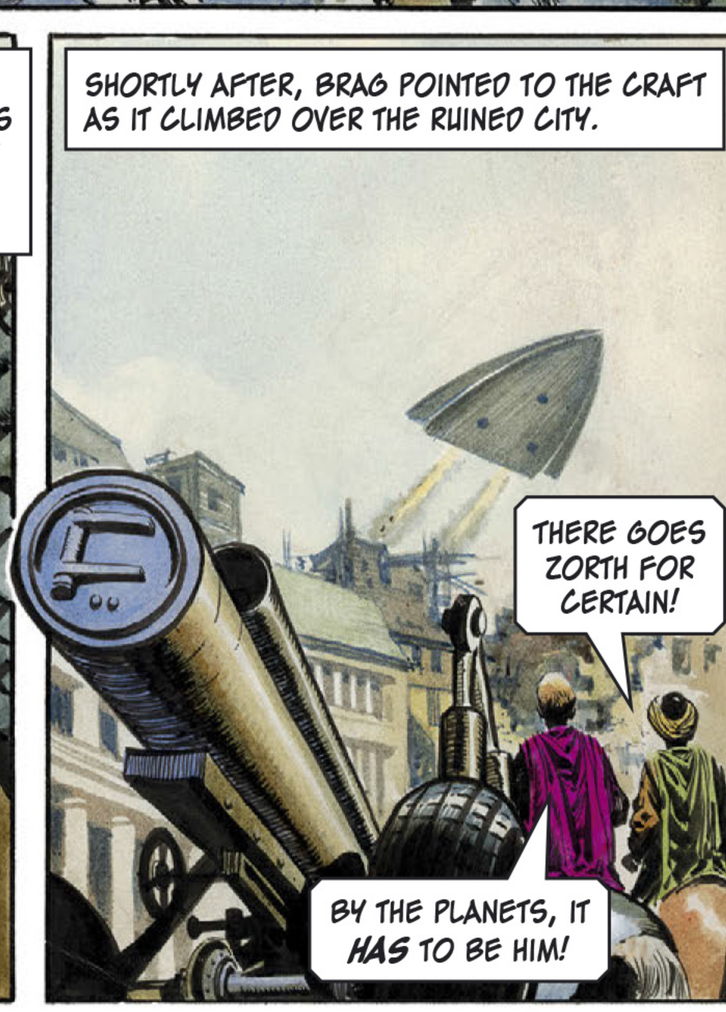
THE POINT BIT DEEPLY INTO THE GROUND... AND THE ENEMY LANCER WAS PLUCKED LIKE A RAG DOLL FROM THE BACK OF HIS CAREERING MOUNT!
AAAAGH!

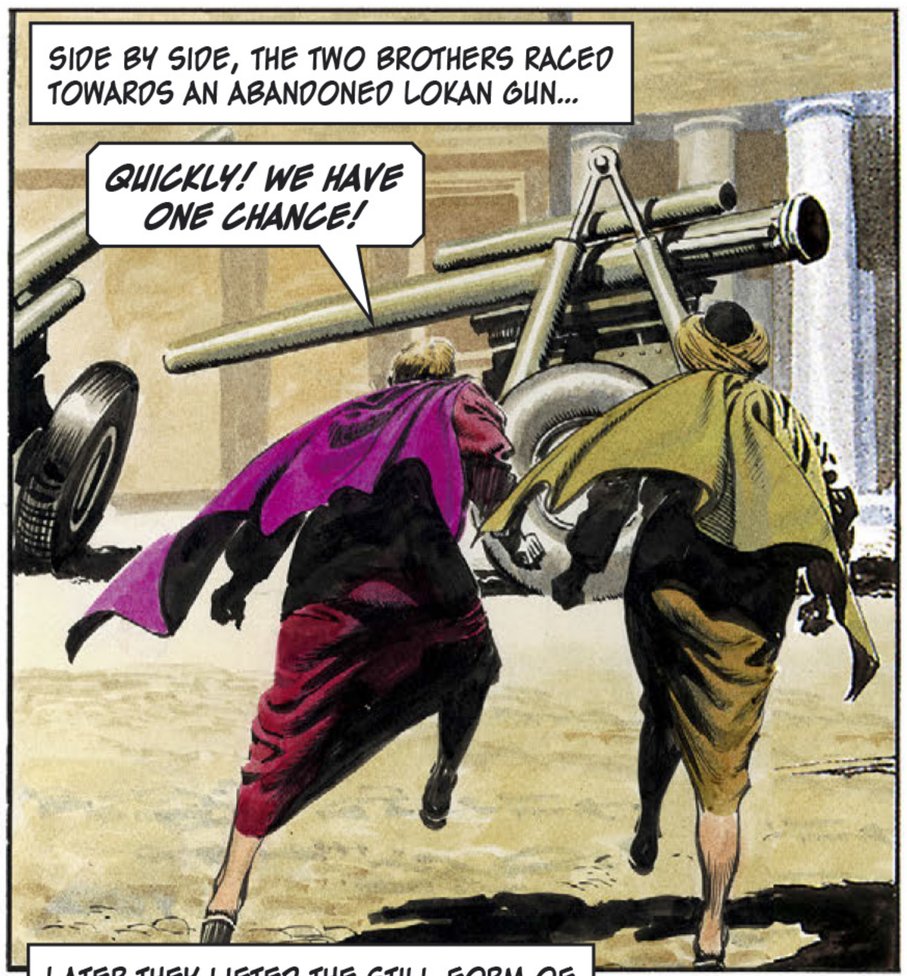
IN A TRICE, TRIGO VAULTED INTO THE EMPTY SADDLE AND SHOUTED ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS FOLLOWERS.
ONE MORE CHARGE FOR TRIGAN... AND THE DAY IS WON!

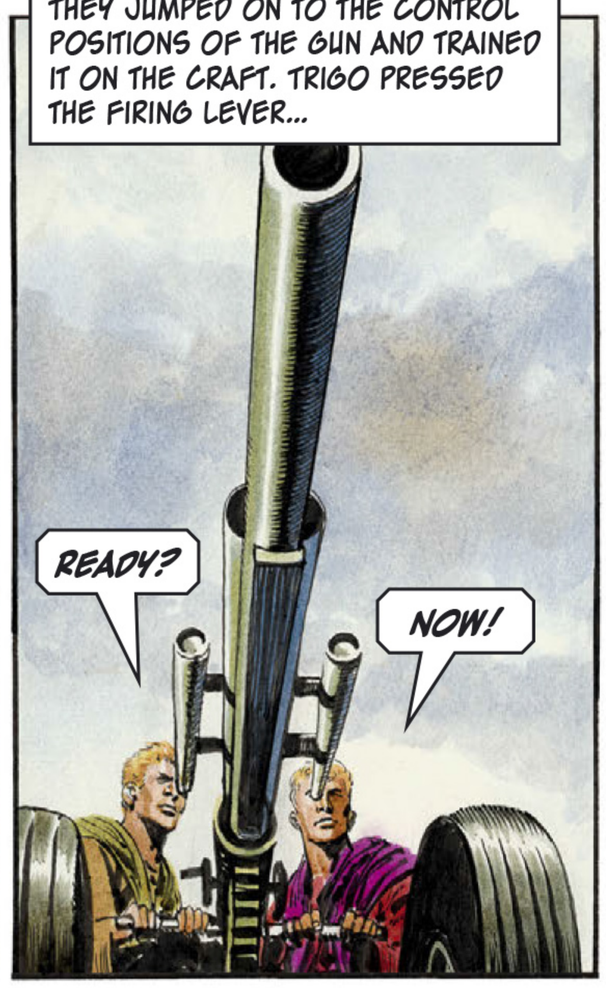
THE TIDE OF THE BATTLE SURGED TO AND FRO BEFORE THE GATES OF TRIGAN BUT, FINALLY, THE LOKANS BROKE... AND RAN!

TRIGO'S VOICE RANG OUT ABOVE THE CONFUSION. HE CALLED TO HIS BROTHER BRAG...
WHERE IS ZORTH? HE MUST BE TAKEN ALIVE!
ZORTH WON'T ESCAPE US, NEVER FEAR!


BUT THE TYRANT KING ZORTH OF LOKA WAS ALREADY MAKING GOOD HIS ESCAPE. AS SOON AS HE SAW THE BATTLE WAS LOST, HE MADE HIS WAY TO HIS PERSONAL ATMOSPHERE CRAFT-THE SOLE SURVIVING CRAFT OF HIS DESTROYED FLEET.
CURSE TRIGO! HE'LL NEVER PUT CHAINS ON ZORTH OF LOKA!

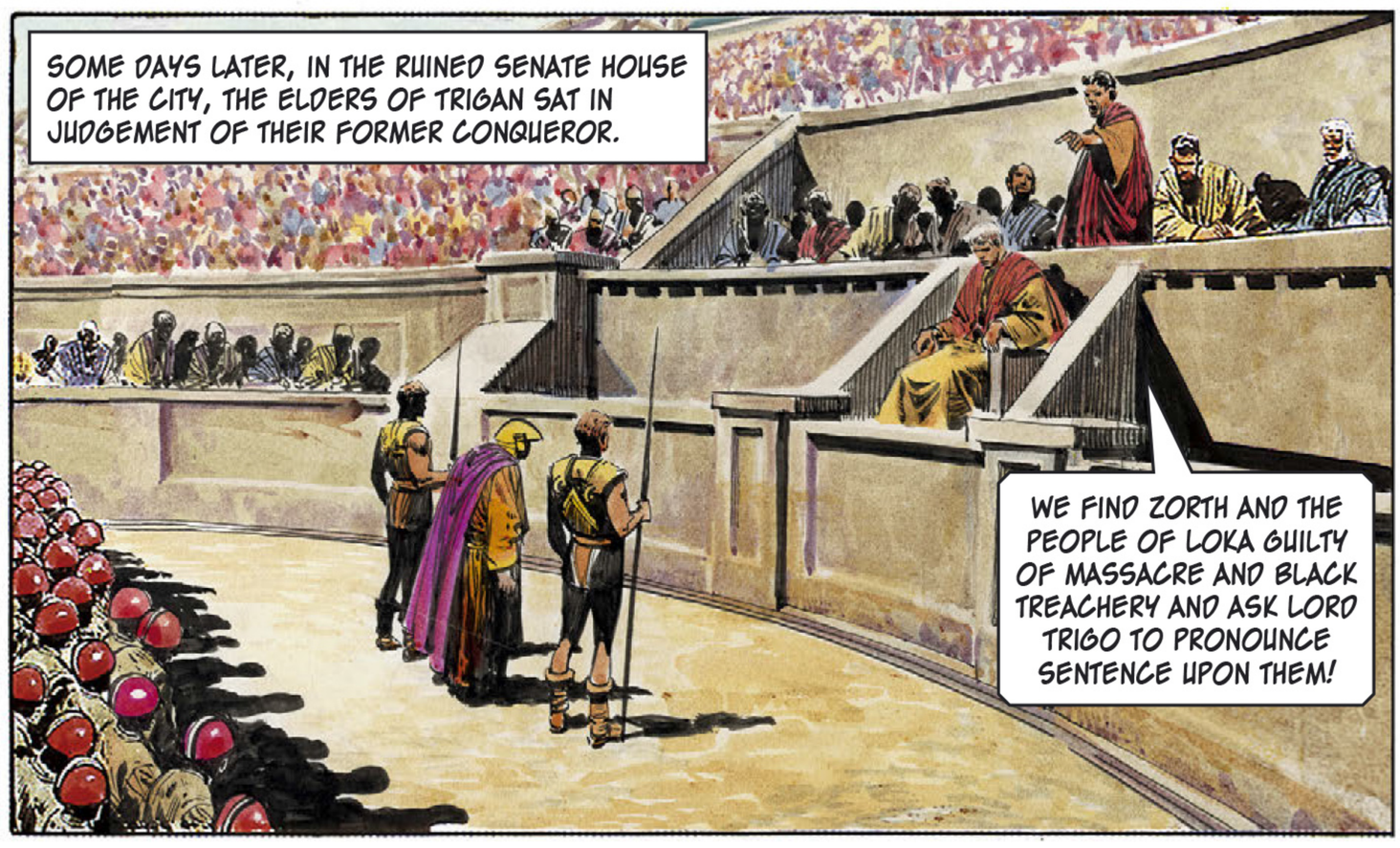

SHORTLY AFTER, BRAG POINTED TO THE CRAFT AS IT CLIMBED OVER THE RUINED CITY.
THERE GOES ZORTH FOR CERTAIN!
BY THE PLANETS, IT HAS TO BE HIM!


SIDE BY SIDE, THE TWO BROTHERS RACED TOWARDS AN ABANDONED LOKAN GUN...
QUICKLY! WE HAVE ONE CHANCE!

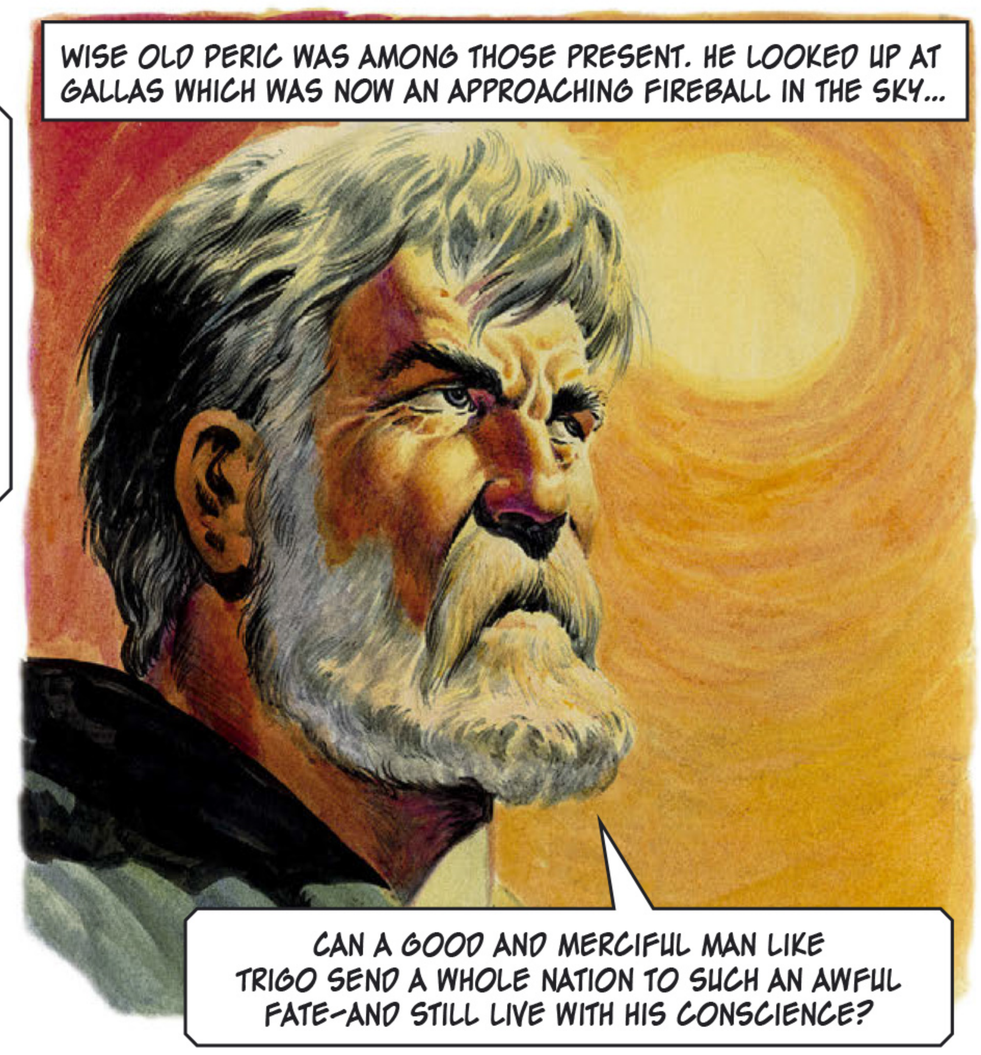

THEY JUMPED ON TO THE CONTROL POSITIONS OF THE GUN AND TRAINED IT ON THE CRAFT. TRIGO PRESSED THE FIRING LEVER...
READY?
NOW!

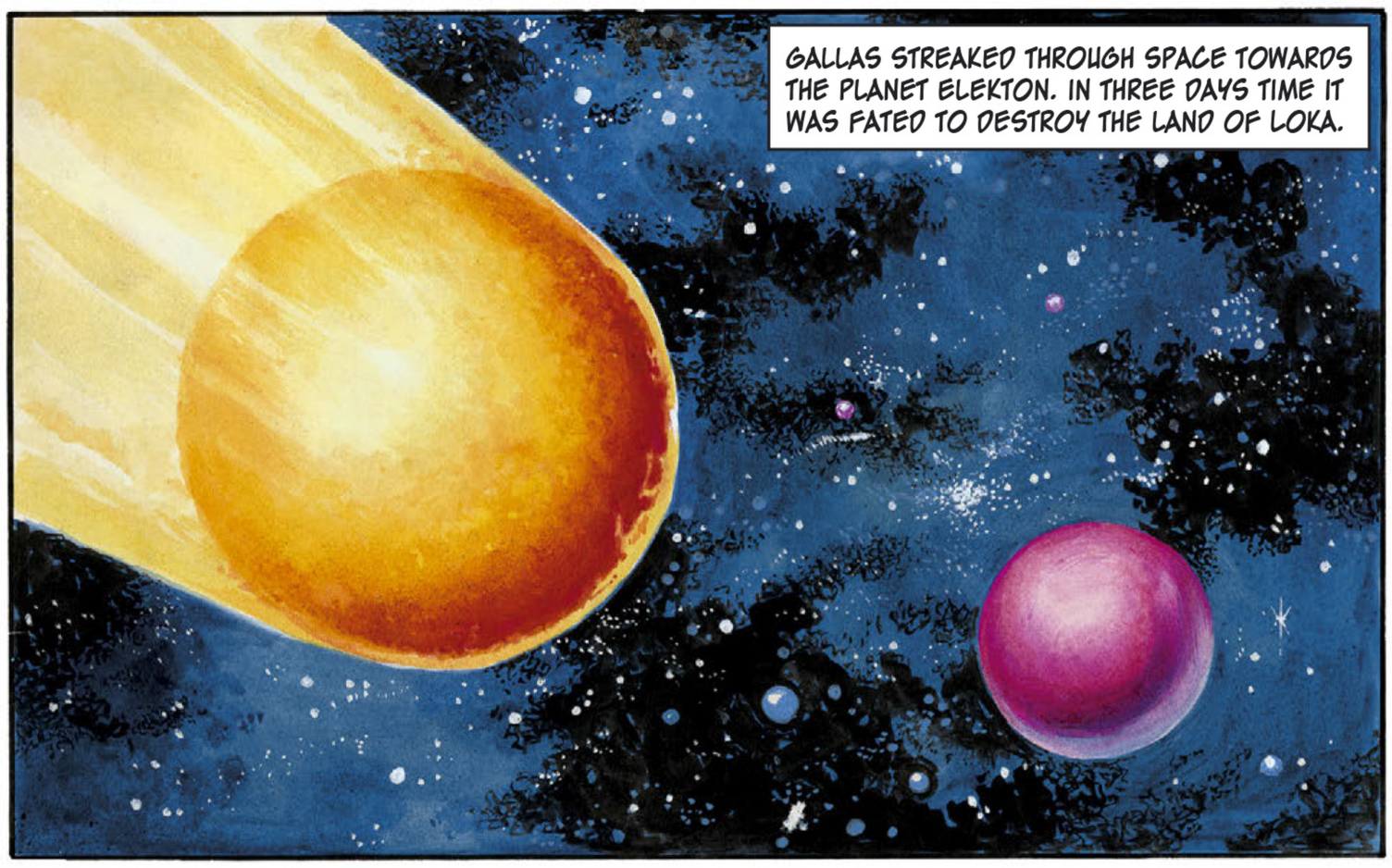
WATCHERS SAW THE TONGUE OF DISINTEGRATING FLAME STRIKE THE CRAFT AND PLUCK IT DOWN FROM THE SKY LIKE A BROKEN BIRD.

LATER THEY LIFTED THE STILL FORM OF THE TYRANT FROM THE WRECKAGE.
HE STILL LIVES, LORD TRIGO!
THEN HE WILL LIVE TO FACE THE STERN JUSTICE OF TRIGAN!


SOME DAYS LATER, IN THE RUINED SENATE HOUSE OF THE CITY, THE ELDERS OF TRIGAN SAT IN JUDGEMENT OF THEIR FORMER CONQUEROR.
WE FIND ZORTH AND THE PEOPLE OF LOKA GUILTY OF MASSACRE AND BLACK TREACHERY AND ASK LORD TRIGO TO PRONOUNCE SENTENCE UPON THEM!

TRIGO'S SENTENCE BROUGHT ZORTH TREMBLING TO HIS KNEES.
ZORTH! YOU CAME TO OUR CITY TO ESCAPE THE DESTRUCTION THAT WILL COME WHEN THE MOON GALLAS COLLIDES WITH LOKA AND YOUR PUNISHMENT WILL BE THIS... TO LEAD YOUR PEOPLE BACK TO LOKA!
NO! NOT THAT!


WISE OLD PERIC WAS AMONG THOSE PRESENT. HE LOOKED UP AT GALLAS WHICH WAS NOW AN APPROACHING FIREBALL IN THE SKY...
CAN A GOOD AND MERCIFUL MAN LIKE TRIGO SEND A WHOLE NATION TO SUCH AN AWFUL FATE–AND STILL LIVE WITH HIS CONSCIENCE?


GALLAS STREAKED THROUGH SPACE TOWARDS THE PLANET ELEKTON. IN THREE DAYS TIME IT WAS FATED TO DESTROY THE LAND OF LOKA.

OUT OF THE CITY OF TRIGAN STREAMED THE MULTITUDE OF DEFEATED LOKANS ON THEIR WAY BACK TO THEIR OWN LAND... AND OBLIVION.

AT THEIR HEAD STUMBLED THE TYRANT KING ZORTH-AND TO HIS TERRIFIED EARS CAME THE YELLS AND CURSES OF THE PEOPLE HE HAD BROUGHT TO DESTRUCTION.
BECAUSE OF THAT ANIMAL WE SHALL ALL PERISH!
HE DESERVES A WORSE FATE THAN TO BE CRUSHED BY GALLAS!

TRIGO AND HIS BROTHER BRAG WATCHED GRIMLY FROM THE BATTLEMENTS OF THE CITY.
YOU WERE RIGHT, BRAG! THE ONLY GOOD LOKANS ARE DEAD LOKANS!

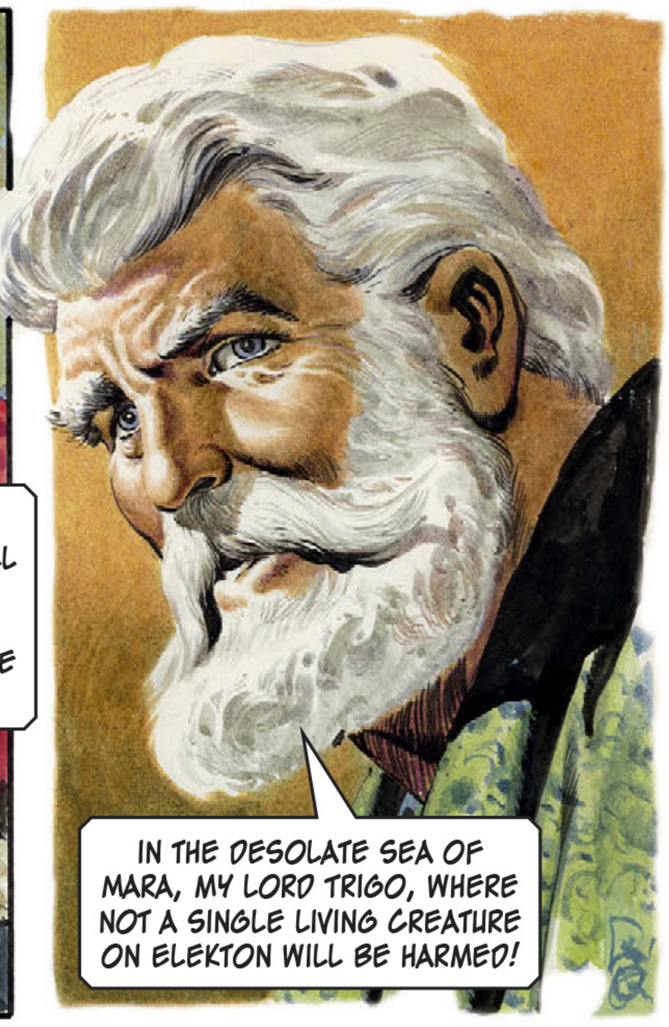
THEN HE SAW THE LOOK OF DOUBT IN HIS BROTHER'S HONEST EYES.
WHAT? DON'T TELL ME YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR MIND?
IT IS ONE THING TO SLAY YOUR ENEMY IN FAIR COMBAT, TRIGO, BUT TO SEND WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO AN AWFUL FATE - I CAN'T STOMACH THAT!

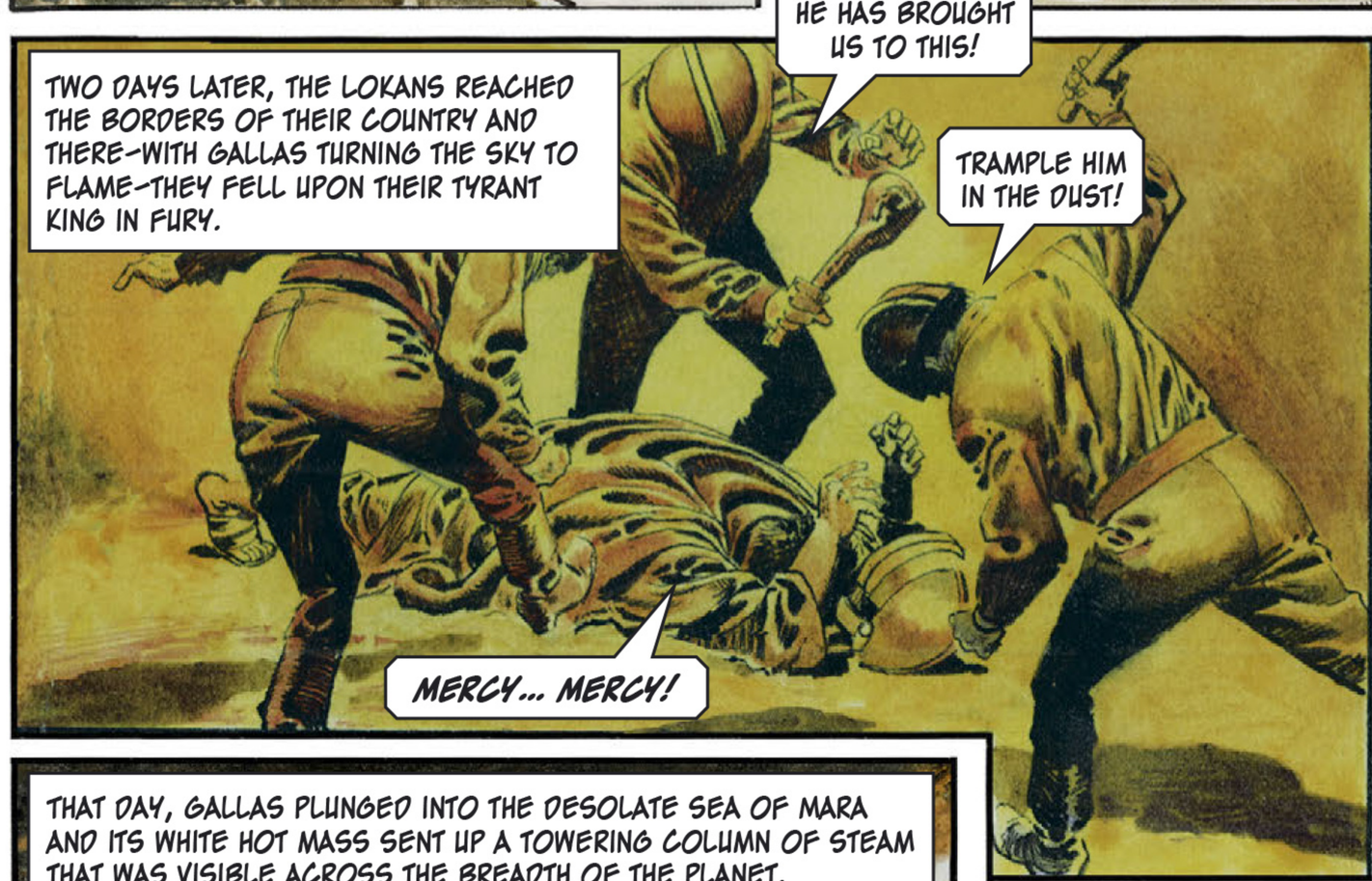
ALL THAT NIGHT TRIGO PACED THE RAMPARTS IN AN AGONY OF MIND...
THE LOKANS CONQUERED THIS CITY BY TREACHERY AND MASSACRED MANY OF MY PEOPLE. DO THEY DESERVE ANY MERCY?

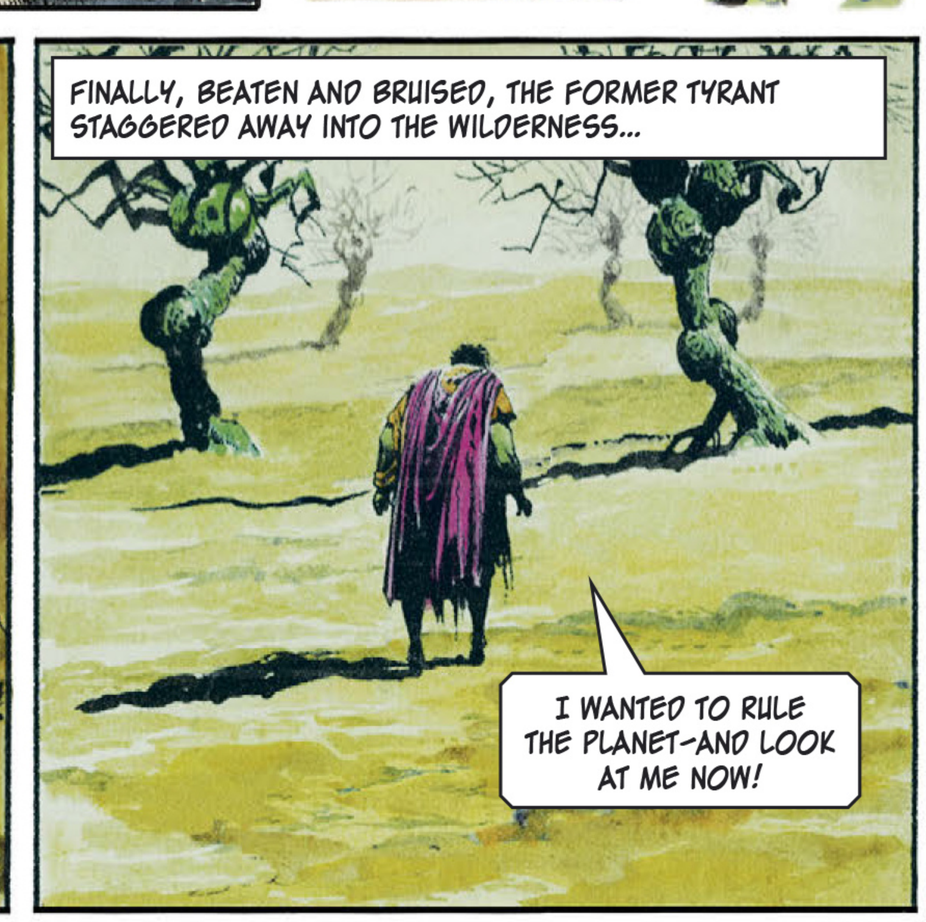
AT DAWN HE CAME TO HIS FINAL DECISION.
CAPTAIN! SEND OUT MESSENGERS AND RECALL THE LOKANS! THEY MAY RETURN TO THE SAFETY OF TRIGAN!
YES, LORD TRIGO!

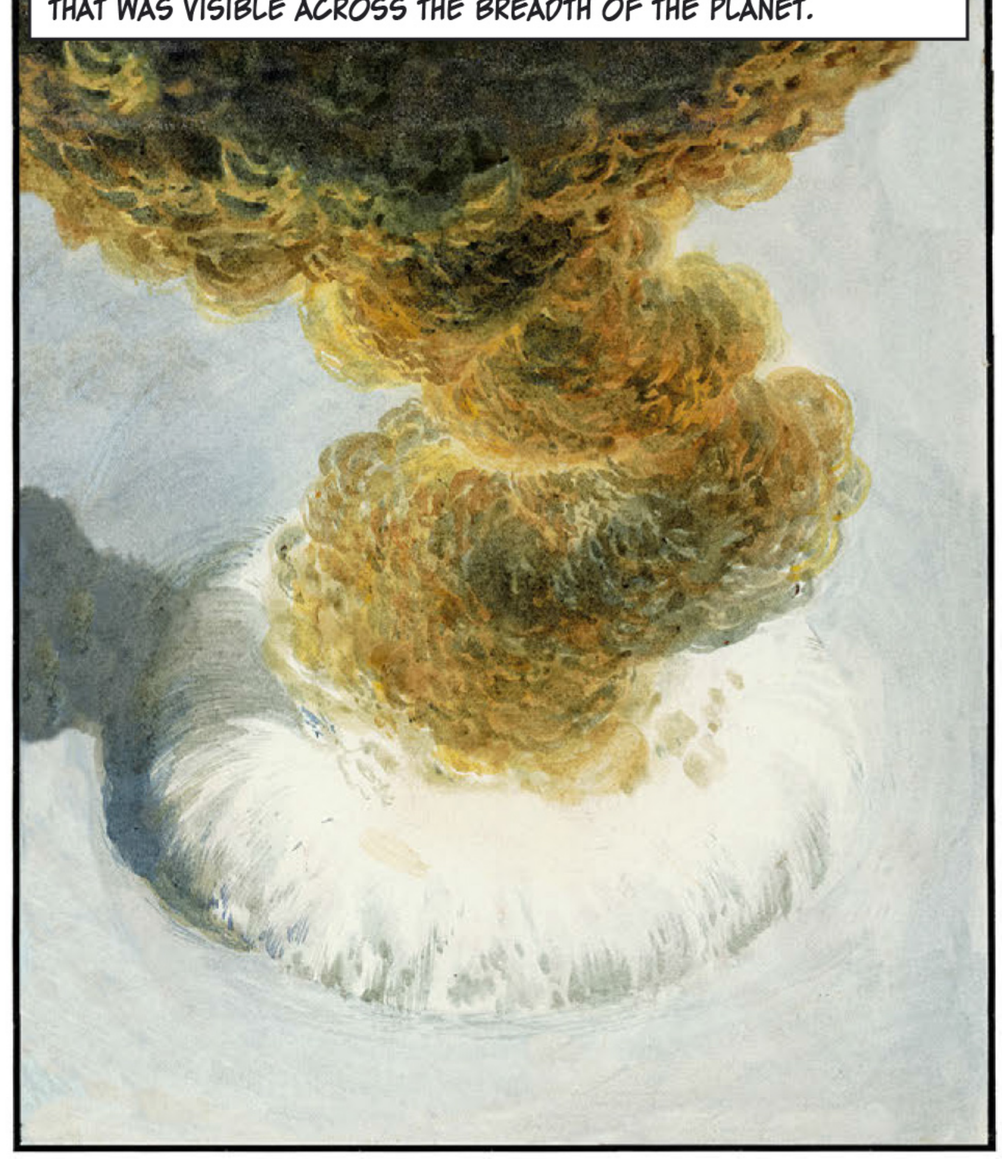
BUT THEN—THE VOICE OF THE WISE OLD PERIC.
NO NEED, MY LORD! THE LOKANS WILL BE AS SAFE IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY AS WE SHALL BE HERE!
WHAT'S THIS?

PERIC EXPLAINED...
MY ASTRAL OBSERVATIONS NOW TELL ME THAT GALLAS RECENTLY PASSED THROUGH A STRATOSPHERIC STORM, WHICH HAS DEFLECTED ITS COURSE...
ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT GALLAS WILL NOT STRIKE LOKA AFTER ALL? THEN WHERE WILL IT STRIKE OUR PLANET?


IN THE DESOLATE SEA OF MARA, MY LORD TRIGO, WHERE NOT A SINGLE LIVING CREATURE ON ELEKTON WILL BE HARMED!


TWO DAYS LATER, THE LOKANS REACHED THE BORDERS OF THEIR COUNTRY AND THERE—WITH GALLAS TURNING THE SKY TO FLAME—THEY FELL UPON THEIR TYRANT KING IN FURY.
HE HAS BROUGHT US TO THIS!
TRAMPLE HIM IN THE DUST!
MERCY... MERCY!


FINALLY, BEATEN AND BRUISED, THE FORMER TYRANT STAGGERED AWAY INTO THE WILDERNESS...
I WANTED TO RULE THE PLANET—AND LOOK AT ME NOW!


THAT DAY, GALLAS PLUNGED INTO THE DESOLATE SEA OF MARA AND ITS WHITE HOT MASS SENT UP A TOWERING COLUMN OF STEAM THAT WAS VISIBLE ACROSS THE BREADTH OF THE PLANET.

TRIGO WATCHED IT FROM THE BATTLEMENTS OF HIS BELOVED CITY.
SO ENDS THE GREATEST PERIL THAT HAS EVER THREATENED OUR PLANET!

IV

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE INVADERS FROM GALLAS

Originally published in ***Ranger***

4th June 1966 – 18th June 1966,

Look and Learn incorporating Ranger 232 – 237

25th June – 30th July 1966

AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET CIRCLED LOW OVER A LOOMING MASS THAT ROSE FROM THE DESOLATE SEA OF MARA.

THERE LIES THE MOON GALLAS!

IN THE CRAFT WERE TRIGO, THE RULER OF TRIGAN, AND THE WISE OLD PERIC.

A YEAR HAS PASSED. GALLAS WILL HAVE COOLED SUFFICIENTLY TO ALLOW OUR SCIENTISTS TO EXPLORE HER, LORD TRIGO.

THE SURFACE LOOKS A GRIM AND DESOLATE PLACE.

A YEAR BEFORE, THE MOON GALLAS HAD COLLIDED WITH THE PLANET ELEKTON BUT, BY GREAT GOOD FORTUNE, HAD LANDED IN THE DESOLATE SEA AND DONE NO HARM.

SET COURSE BACK TO TRIGAN... I HATE THE SIGHT OF THAT ACCURSED MOON.

THE FOLLOWING DAWN, A STRANGE THING HAPPENED... FROM ONE OF THE DEAD CRATERS OF GALLAS, THERE ROSE A TOWERING EXPLOSION.

WHEN THE SMOKE HAD CLEARED AWAY, A GLEAMING METAL CYLINDER AROSE FROM THE CRATER.

THE END OF THE CYLINDER FELL AWAY... AND A SCARLET HAND EMERGED!

SOME TIME LATER, ONE OF THE FEW FISHING BOATS THAT WRESTED A BARE LIVING FROM THE DESOLATE SEA DREW CLOSE TO GALLAS.

THERE ARE FEW FISH TO BE FOUND HERE EVER SINCE THAT ACCURSED THING FELL INTO THE SEA...

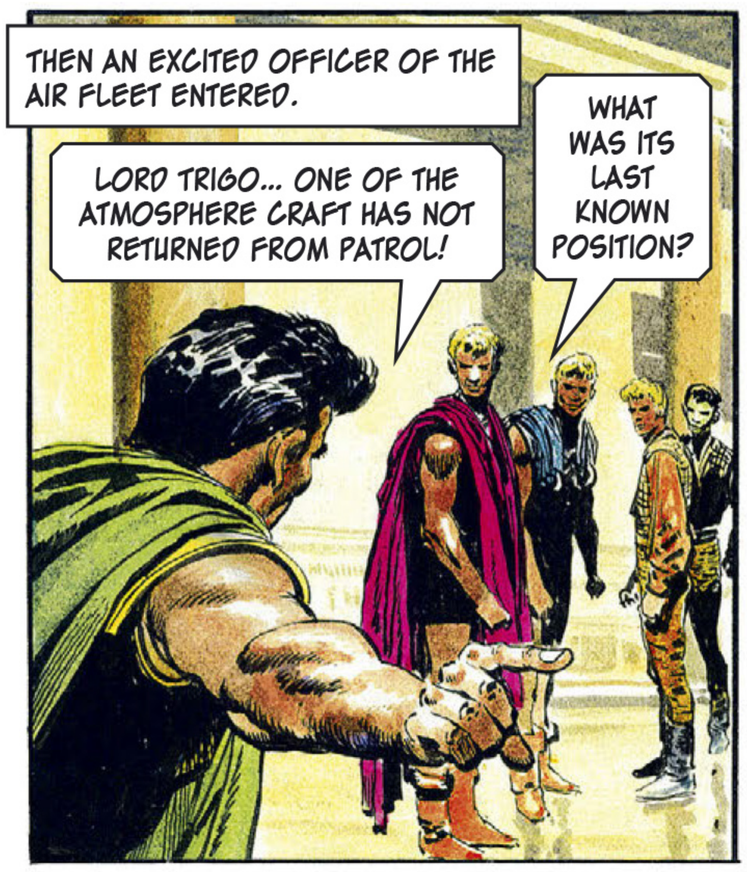
SUDDENLY, A STRANGE HUMMING SOUND FILLED THE AIR, CAUSING THE FISHERMAN TO RISE TO HIS FEET, DROPPING THE STEERING OAR... IN A HOARSE, DEAD VOICE HE SPOKE AS IF IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION.
YES... I AM LISTENING... SPEAK...
I HEAR... AND I WILL OBEY!
SEIZING HIS SLEEPING COMRADE IN HIS ARMS, THE FISHERMAN FLUNG HIMSELF OVER THE SIDE OF THE BOAT... INTO THE CHILL WATERS.
AAAAAAGH!
THE SEA OF MARA CLOSED OVER THEIR HEADS... AND THE SMALL VESSEL SAILED ON... ALONE...
A FEW DAYS LATER, A TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WAS PATROLLING THE SEA OF MARA IN THE VICINITY OF GALLAS...
GALLAS AHEAD, CAPTAIN!
COME DOWN LOWER AND WE WILL ATTEMPT A LANDING.
AND THEN... A CHANGE CAME OVER THE PILOT'S FACE...
I HEAR... YES, I WILL OBEY... ANYTHING...
HE JERKED THE CONTROL LEVER AND THE CRAFT PLUNGED INTO A DIZZY DIVE... HEADING STRAIGHT FOR DESTRUCTION!
AAAAAAGH! STOP HIM! STOP HIM! HE'LL DESTROY US ALL!

MEANWHILE, THE CLASH OF BLADE ON BLADE RESOUNDED THROUGH THE RULER'S PALACE AT TRIGAN.
STRIKE AT THEM, KEREN! WE'LL WIN THIS CONTEST!
NOT IF WE CAN HELP IT!

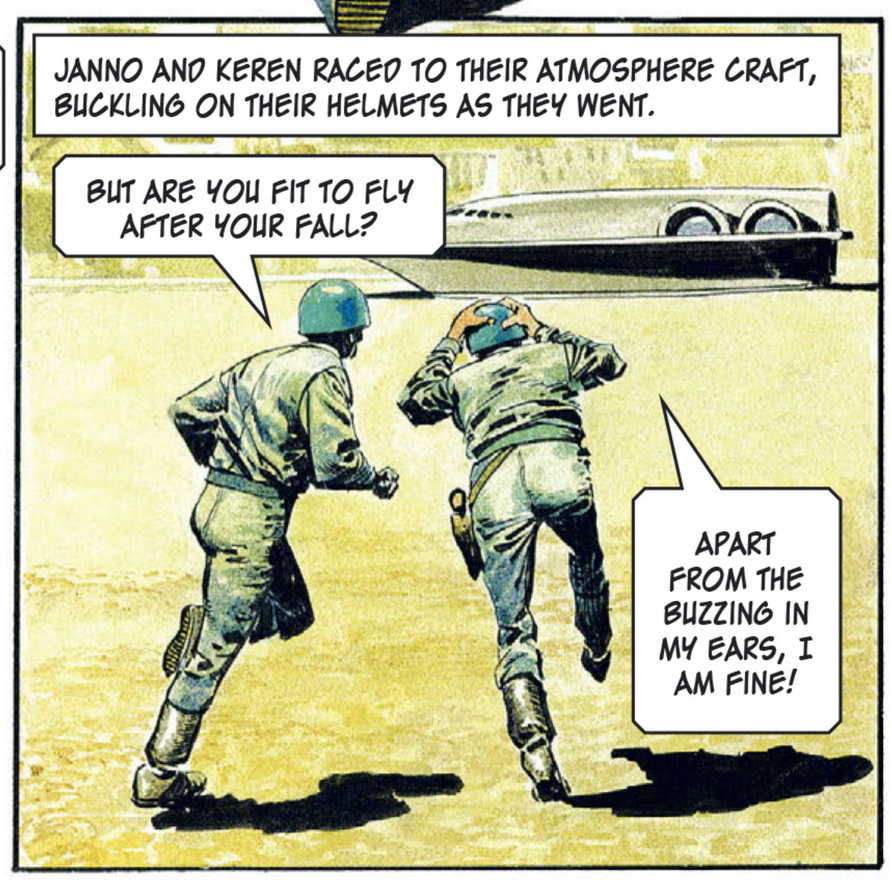
TRIGO AND YOUNG KEREN WERE ENGAGED IN A FRIENDLY CONTEST WITH BRAG AND HIS SON JANNO. THOUGH FRIENDLY, THE CONTEST WAS FAR FROM TAME!
HAH!

JANNO MISSED HIS FOOTING AND FELL HEAVILY, CRASHING HIS HEAD AGAINST A PILLAR.
UUUGH!

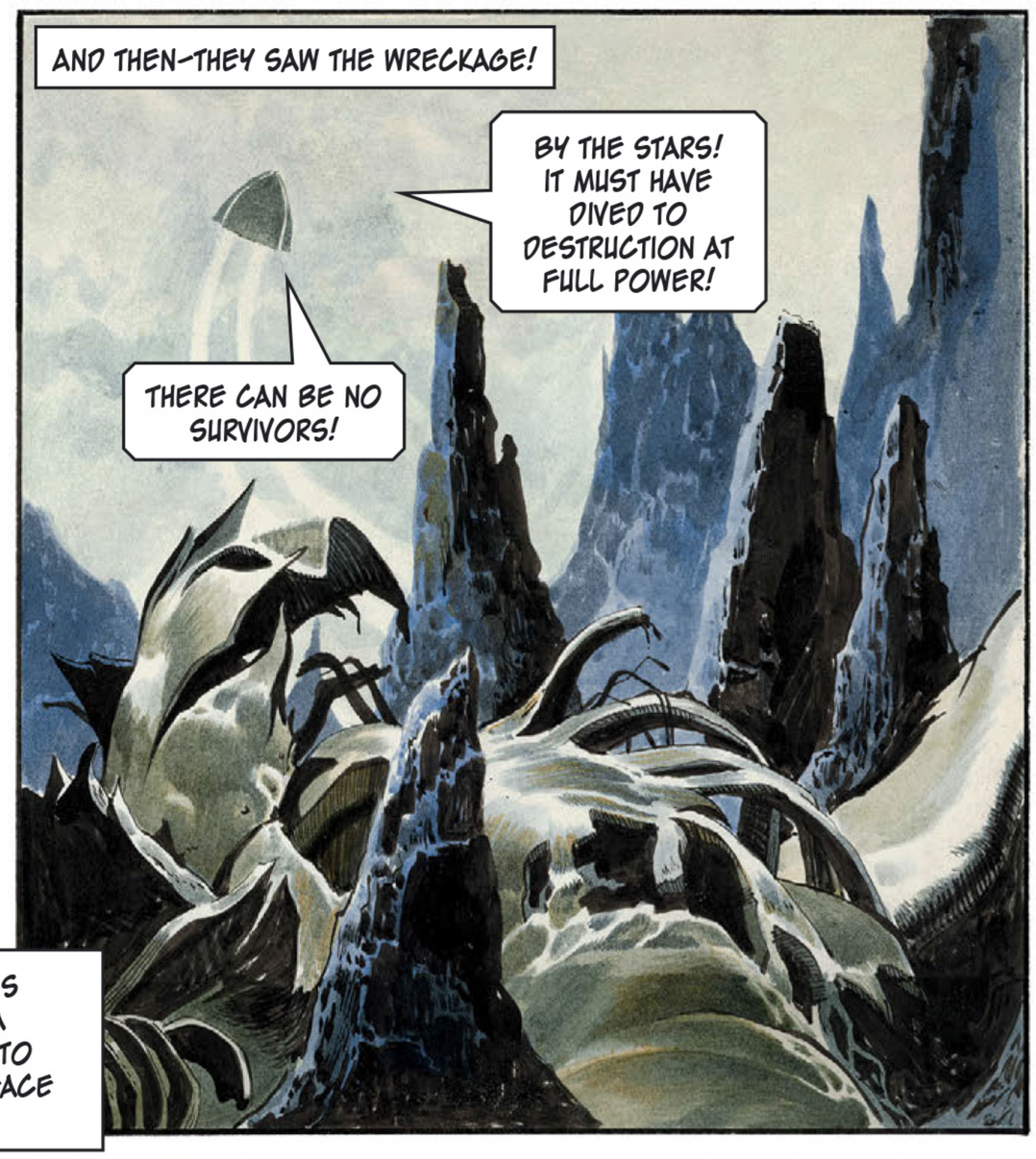
BUT SOON HE WAS SITTING UP AND RUBBING HIS ACHING HEAD.
UGH! THERE'S A SINGING IN MY EARS LIKE THE WAR-CRY OF THE LOKANS!
I THINK WE MAY SAY WE HAVE WON THE CONTEST, KEREN!


THEN AN EXCITED OFFICER OF THE AIR FLEET ENTERED.
LORD TRIGO... ONE OF THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT HAS NOT RETURNED FROM PATROL!
WHAT WAS ITS LAST KNOWN POSITION?

THE VICINITY OF GALLAS, OVER THE SEA OF MARA, LORD TRIGO.
THEN SEND ANOTHER CRAFT TO SEARCH THE SURFACE OF GALLAS.
KEREN AND I WILL GO, UNCLE.


JANNO AND KEREN RACED TO THEIR ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, BUCKLING ON THEIR HELMETS AS THEY WENT.
BUT ARE YOU FIT TO FLY AFTER YOUR FALL?
APART FROM THE BUZZING IN MY EARS, I AM FINE!

FLYING LOW, THEY SOON CAME IN SIGHT OF THE GREEN MASS RISING FROM THE SURFACE OF THE DESOLATE SEA.
I'LL CIRCLE GALLAS... SEE IF YOU CAN SPOT ANYTHING.


AND THEN—THEY SAW THE WRECKAGE!
BY THE STARS! IT MUST HAVE DIVED TO DESTRUCTION AT FULL POWER!
THERE CAN BE NO SURVIVORS!

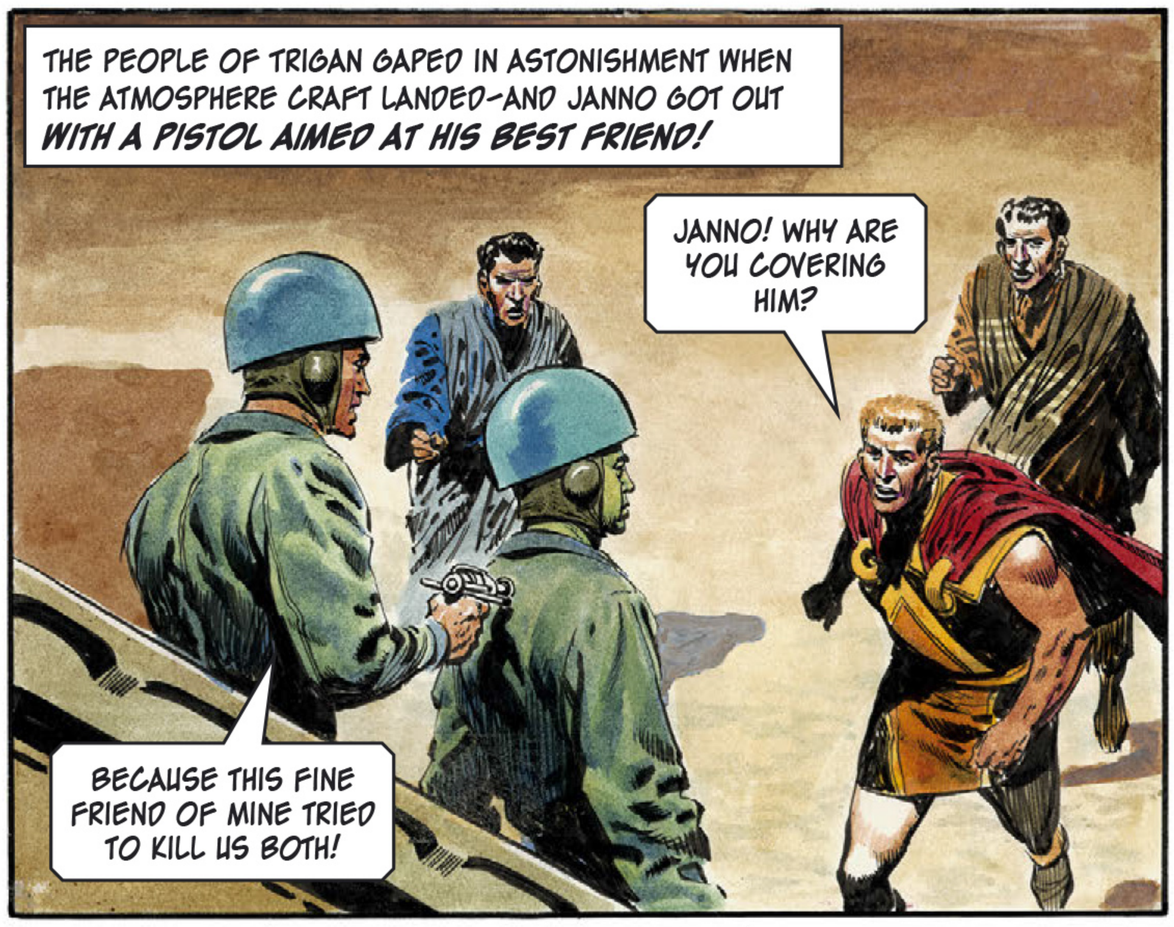
FOR A WHILE THEY CIRCLED THE SCENE OF THE TRAGEDY. THEN, A STRANGE CHANGE CAME OVER KEREN AND HE MUTTERED IN A HOARSE VOICE...
YES... I HEAR... SPEAK ON...
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?

NEXT INSTANT, JANNO FELT HIS CONTROL COLUMN TAKEN IN A VICE-LIKE GRIP... HE TURNED TO STARE INTO THE MASK-LIKE FACE OF HIS COMPANION!
DESTROY! DESTROY!
KEREN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU'LL KILL US BOTH!

WITH SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH, KEREN THRUST THE CONTROLS FORWARD AND THE CRAFT DIPPED INTO A FATAL DIVE. THEN JANNO ACTED—AND DROVE HIS BUNCHED FIST INTO HIS FRIEND'S FACE!
HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES?
UUUUGH!

WRENCHING BACK THE CONTROL COLUMN, JANNO SAVED HIS CRAFT FROM DIVING INTO THE SURFACE OF GALLAS!

HIS HAIRBREADTH ESCAPE DID NOT GO UNOBSERVED. STRANGE BEINGS WATCHED FROM GALLAS...
WHY ARE WE NOT BEING OBEYED?
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. THE ORDER WAS GIVEN TO BOTH MEN IN THE CRAFT!


THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN GAPED IN ASTONISHMENT WHEN THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT LANDED–AND JANNO GOT OUT WITH A PISTOL AIMED AT HIS BEST FRIEND!
JANNO! WHY ARE YOU COVERING HIM?
BECAUSE THIS FINE FRIEND OF MINE TRIED TO KILL US BOTH!

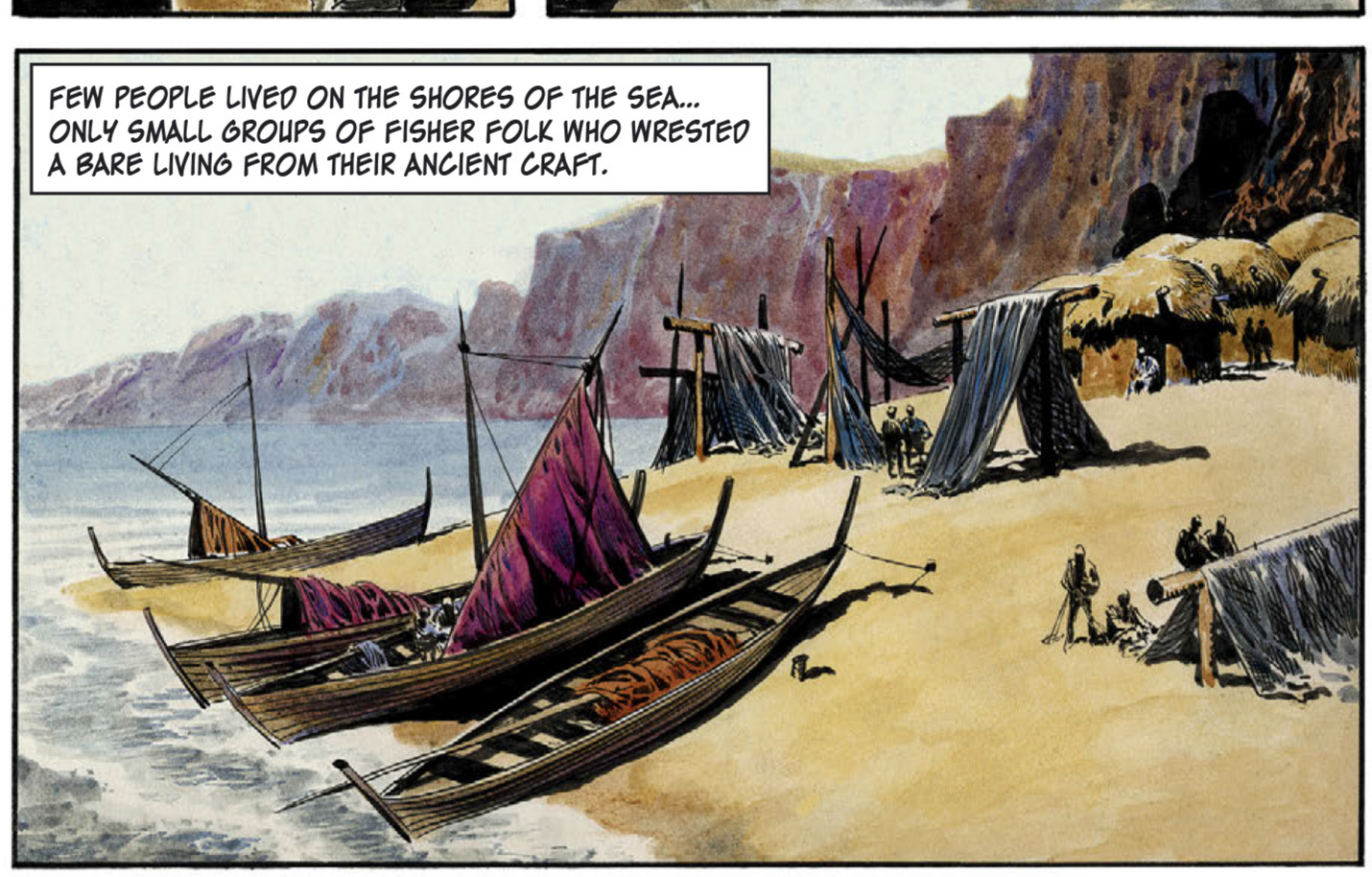
TRIGO STARED DISBELIEVINGLY AT HIS NEPHEW.
HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES?
NO, UNCLE. THERE STANDS THE ONE WHO'S GONE MAD!
WHERE– WHERE AM I?

KEREN BLINKED AND RUBBED HIS EYES LIKE ONE AWAKENING FROM SLEEP...
JANNO, OLD FRIEND, DON'T WAVE THAT PISTOL AROUND. YOU MIGHT HURT SOMEONE.
JUST LISTEN TO HIM! HARM SOMEONE INDEED!

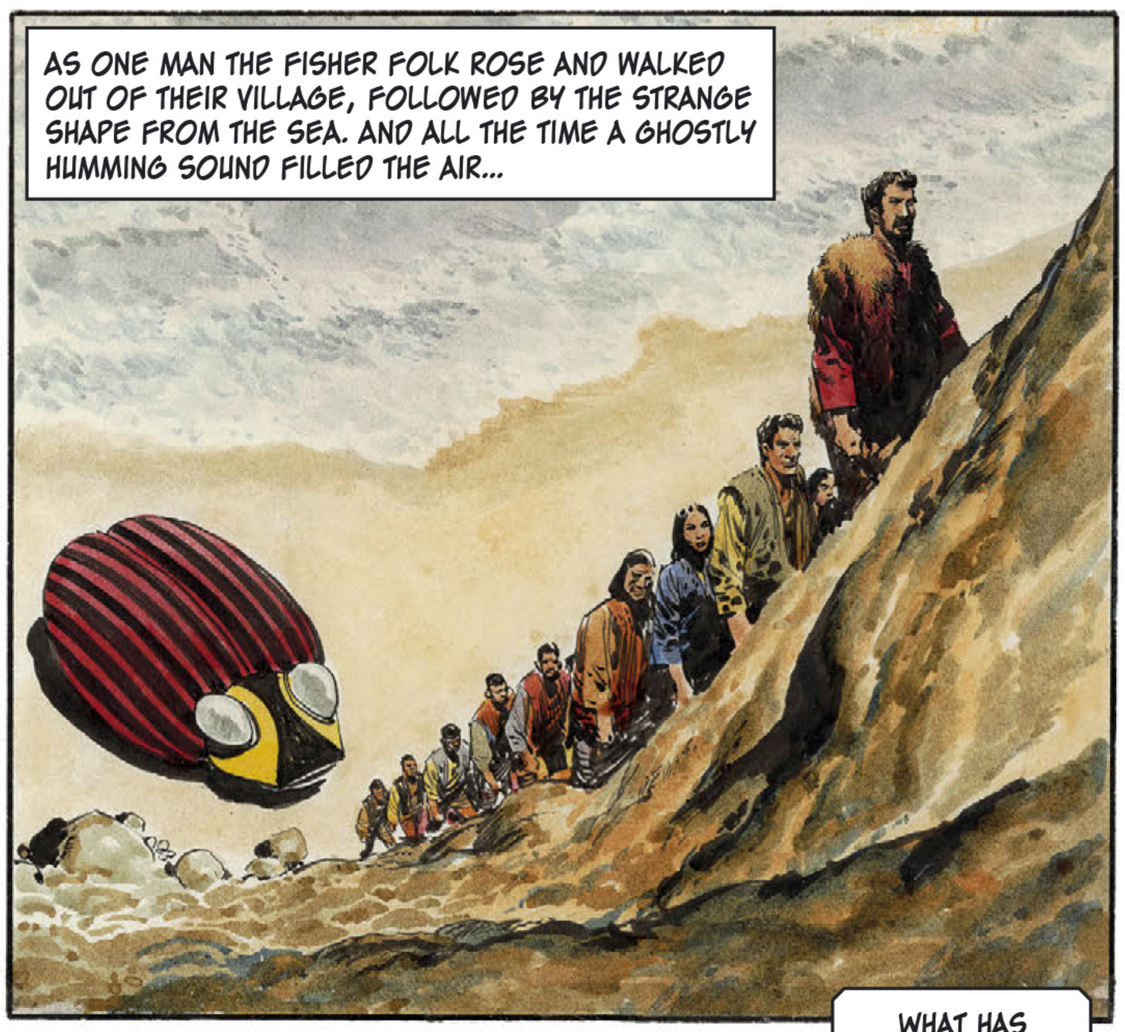
BUT LATER, AFTER HE HAD RESTED, KEREN WAS ABLE TO SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE STRANGE MYSTERY...
IT... IT ALL STARTED TO HAPPEN SOON AFTER WE SAW THE WRECKED CRAFT. SOMETHING SEEMED TO TELL ME TO DESTROY US BOTH. SUDDENLY DESTRUCTION SEEMED MORE IMPORTANT THAN LIVING...

AND MEANWHILE, ON THE SURFACE OF THE MOON GALLAS, SOMETHING STIRRED!

THE FANTASTIC SHAPE SLIPPED SILENTLY INTO THE SEA OF MARA AND CRAWLED LIKE SOME MONSTER OF THE DEEP ALONG THE SEA BED.


FEW PEOPLE LIVED ON THE SHORES OF THE SEA... ONLY SMALL GROUPS OF FISHER FOLK WHO WRESTED A BARE LIVING FROM THEIR ANCIENT CRAFT.

AND THEN... THE STRANGE TERROR FELL UPON THEM!
I HEAR AND I WILL OBEY...
DESTRUCTION... YES, DESTRUCTION...!


AS ONE MAN THE FISHER FOLK ROSE AND WALKED OUT OF THEIR VILLAGE, FOLLOWED BY THE STRANGE SHAPE FROM THE SEA. AND ALL THE TIME A GHOSTLY HUMMING SOUND FILLED THE AIR...

WHEN THEY CAME TO THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF... THEY KEPT ON WALKING!

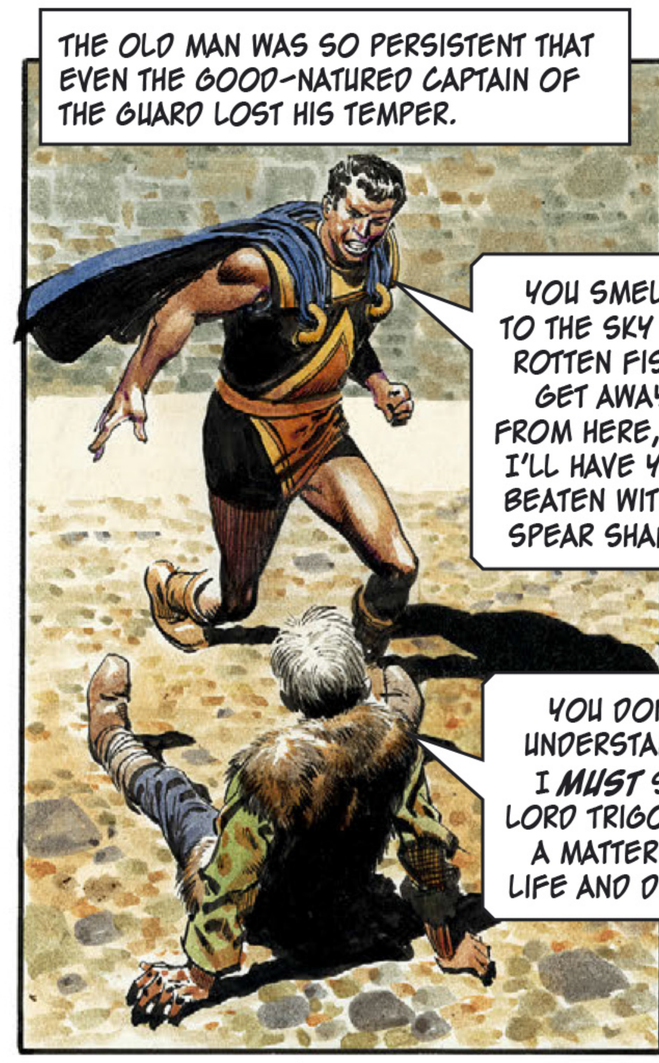
ONE MAN ALONE ESCAPED THE DESTRUCTION-AND HE STOOD IN THE DESERTED VILLAGE, STARING IN ALARM AND DISBELIEF...
WHAT HAS HAPPENED? WHY DID THEY DO IT? WHY?

HE SAW THE STRANGE SHAPE APPROACHING AGAIN AND HE TURNED AND RAN.
TRIGAN... THAT'S WHERE I'LL GO! TO TRIGAN!

THE MONSTER OF DESTRUCTION CRAWLED ON ITS WAY... AND TWO HEADS EMERGED FROM ITS UPPER PART...
WE WILL CONTINUE THE WORK OF ELIMINATION...

...IN THAT DIRECTION!
AND THE FINGER POINTED TOWARDS... TRIGAN!

LATER THAT AFTERNOON, AN OLD FISHERMAN FROM THE SEA OF MARA WAS TO BE SEEN ARGUING WITH THE GUARDS AT THE GATE OF THE RULER'S PALACE IN TRIGAN.
BUT I MUST SEE LORD TRIGO!
ARE YOU DEAF, OLD FOOL? FOR THE TENTH TIME, LORD TRIGO IS NOT TO BE BOTHERED BY THE LIKES OF YOU!


THE OLD MAN WAS SO PERSISTENT THAT EVEN THE GOOD-NATURED CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD LOST HIS TEMPER.
YOU SMELL TO THE SKY OF ROTTEN FISH. GET AWAY FROM HERE, OR I'LL HAVE YOU BEATEN WITH A SPEAR SHAFT!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND... I MUST SEE LORD TRIGO. IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!

FINALLY, THE OLD FISHERMAN CREPT AWAY, STILL MUTTERING TO HIMSELF.
NO ONE WILL LISTEN TO ME. WHAT AM I TO DO?
HE WENT-AND WITH HIM WENT THE LAST HOPE OF SAVING TRIGAN FROM A TERRIBLE DISASTER!

TRIGO, MEANWHILE, WAS PACING THE FLOOR OF HIS COUNCIL CHAMBER.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN? SOME STRANGE FORCE MADE YOUNG KEREN TRY TO DESTROY HIMSELF AND HIS BEST FRIEND. WHY? AND HOW?

WISE OLD PERIC SPOKE...
IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE SAME EVIL FORCE WAS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OTHER CRASH!
TRUE! AND THAT HAPPENED OVER GALLAS. THE KEY TO THE MYSTERY LIES ON GALLAS!

ORDER AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT TO BE MADE READY AT DAWN. I MYSELF WILL LAND ON GALLAS AND MEET THIS EVIL THING FACE TO FACE!

NIGHT CLOSED OVER THE CITY AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE PALACE GUARD MADE THE ROUNDS OF HIS SENTRIES.
KEEP A GOOD WATCH, MAN. I AM GOING UP ON TO THE RAMPARTS.

FROM OUT OF THE SHADOWY PLAIN, A STRANGE SHAPE CRAWLED MENACINGLY TOWARDS THE SLEEPING CITY.

BLANK, STARING EYES GAZED UPON TRIGAN...
WE WILL COMMENCE THE WORK OF DESTRUCTION. FIRST... THE RULER OF THE CITY!

WHAT? SPEAK! I AM LISTENING...
ON THE PALACE RAMPARTS, THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD SUDDENLY HALTED IN MID-STRIDE AND LOOKED OUT OVER THE PLAIN.

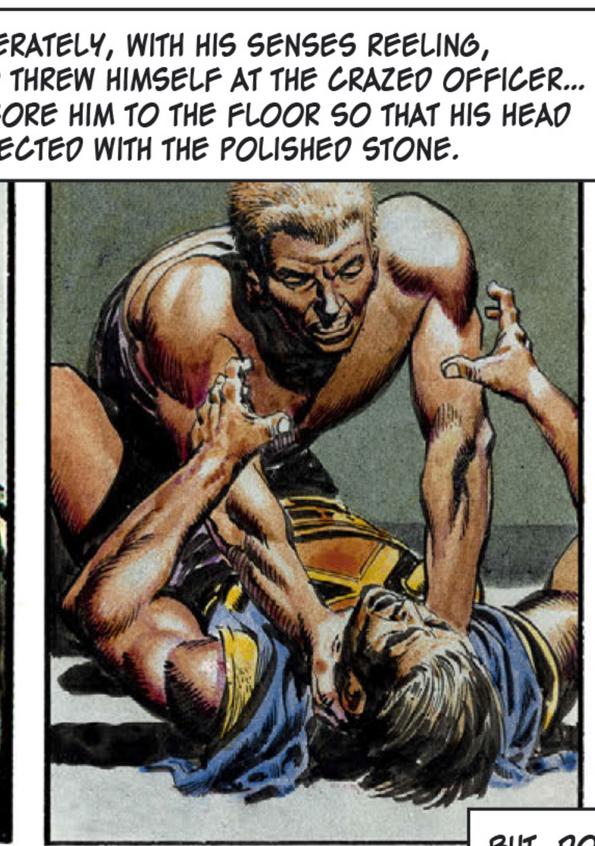
HIS GLEAMING BLADE RASPED FROM ITS SCABBARD...
I HEAR... AND I WILL OBEY...

...AND THEN HE WAS RUNNING, PELL-MELL, THROUGH THE SILENT CORRIDORS OF THE PALACE.

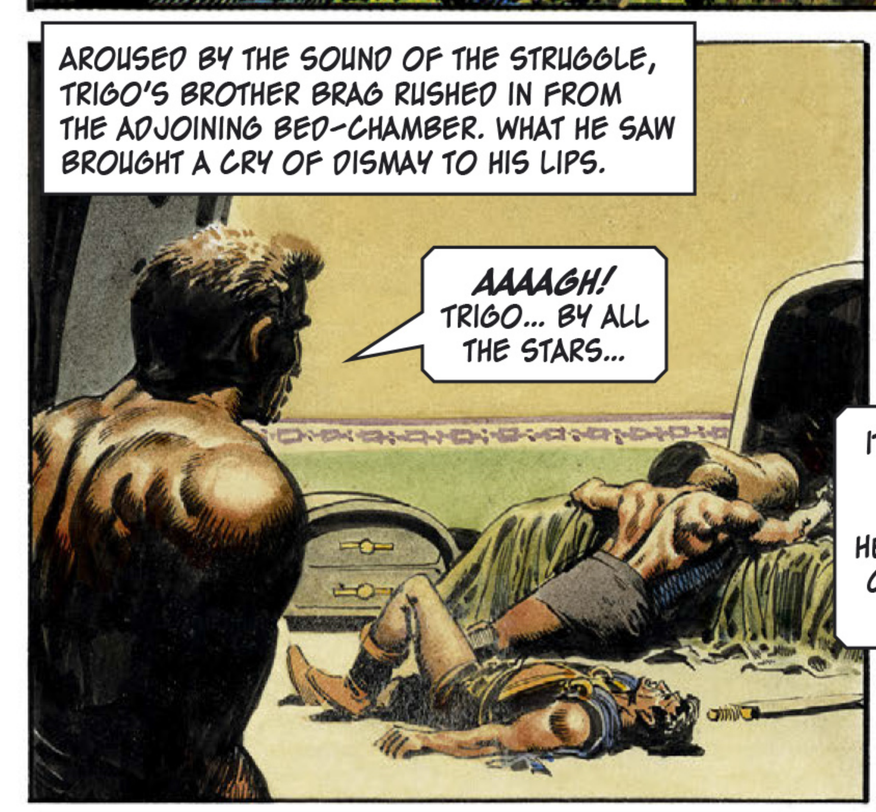
TRIGO SLEPT THE LIGHT SLEEP OF A SEASONED WARRIOR. HE WAS AWAKE AND ALERT THE MOMENT THE OFFICER BURST THROUGH HIS DOOR.
OH, IT'S YOU, CAPTAIN. WHAT'S AMISS?

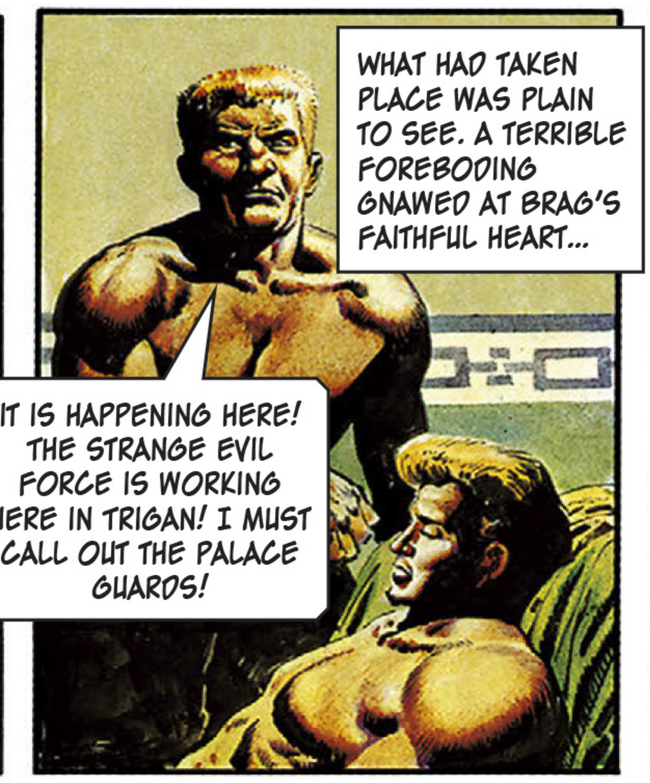
AND THEN...
DESTROY! ELIMINATE!

WITH A SWIFT MOVEMENT OF HIS ARM, TRIGO WAS ABLE TO DEFLECT THE FULL FORCE OF THE DOWN-SWINGING SWORD... AND THE FLAT OF THE BLADE STRUCK HIM A STUNNING BLOW ON THE TEMPLE.
UUUUGH!
DESTROY! DESTROY!


DESPERATELY, WITH HIS SENSES REELING, TRIGO THREW HIMSELF AT THE CRAZED OFFICER... AND BORE HIM TO THE FLOOR SO THAT HIS HEAD CONNECTED WITH THE POLISHED STONE.

TRIGO TRIED TO RISE... BUT HIS KNEES BUCKLED BENEATH HIM.


AROUSED BY THE SOUND OF THE STRUGGLE, TRIGO'S BROTHER BRAG RUSHED IN FROM THE ADJOINING BED-CHAMBER. WHAT HE SAW BROUGHT A CRY OF DISMAY TO HIS LIPS.
AAAAGH! TRIGO... BY ALL THE STARS...


WHAT HAD TAKEN PLACE WAS PLAIN TO SEE. A TERRIBLE FOREBODING GNAWED AT BRAG'S FAITHFUL HEART...
IT IS HAPPENING HERE! THE STRANGE EVIL FORCE IS WORKING HERE IN TRIGAN! I MUST CALL OUT THE PALACE GUARDS!

BUT, DOWN IN THE COURTYARD, THE PALACE GUARDS WERE ALREADY SUCCUMBING TO THE STRANGE HUMMING SOUND THAT CAME FROM THE DARK PLAIN BEYOND THE WALLS...
I HEAR... AND OBEY...
YES... YES!
DESTROY... DESTROY ALL...

IN SLAVISH OBEDIENCE TO THE FORCE THAT BENT THEIR MINDS, THE SOLDIERS HURLED THEMSELVES UPON EACH OTHER... COMRADE AGAINST COMRADE.
ELIMINATE! DESTROY!
AAAAAAGH!

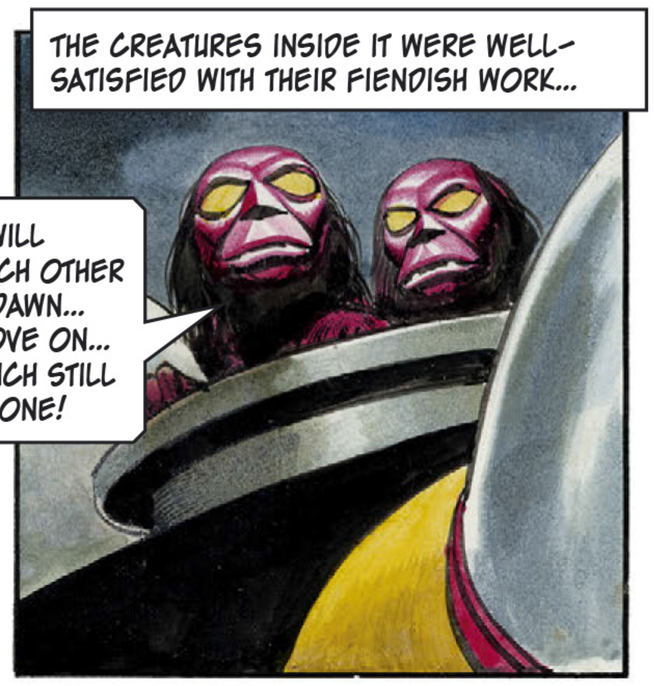
ALL OVER THE CITY, PEOPLE WERE AWAKENED...
YES... YES... SPEAK...

...AND THREW THEMSELVES WITH FURY UPON EVERYTHING THAT LIVED... EVEN THEIR OWN LOVED ONES!
FATHER! FATHER... NO!

HOISTING HIS UNCONSCIOUS BROTHER ACROSS HIS BROAD SHOULDERS, BRAG DESCENDED THE STEPS OF THE PALACE.
THERE IS DEVILRY ABROAD IN THE CITY TONIGHT!

THEN-LOOKING UP-HE SAW HIS OWN SON!
JANNO-AAAAGH!
DIE!

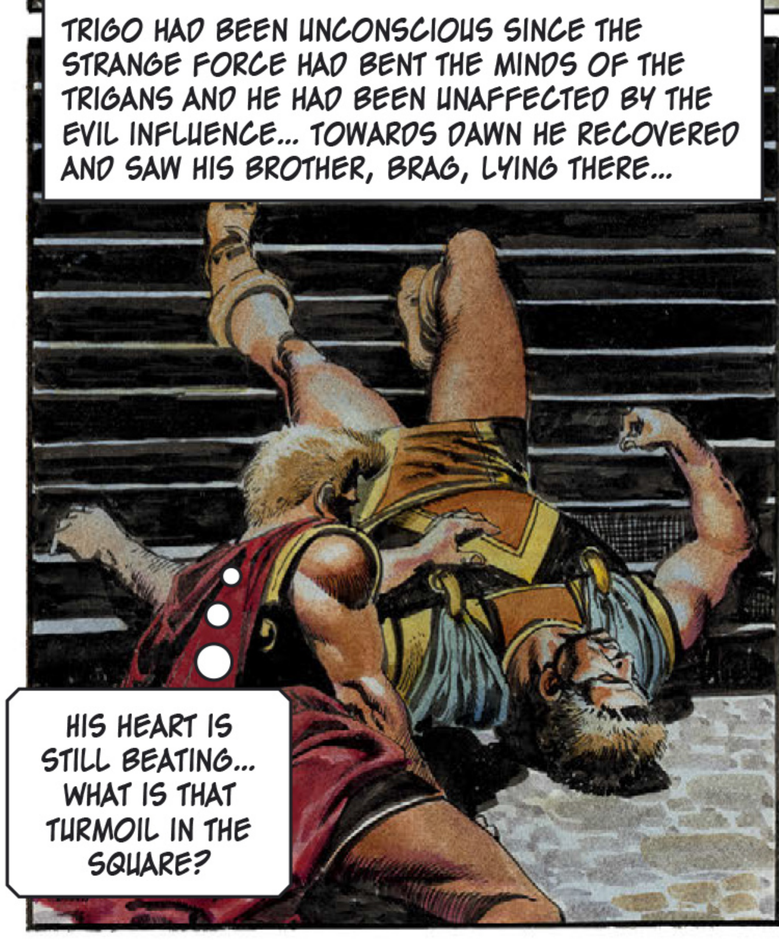
A STONE'S THROW FROM THE CITY GATES, THE STRANGE SHAPE CRAWLED SLOWLY FORWARD...
THEY WILL DESTROY EACH OTHER BEFORE DAWN... WE WILL MOVE ON... THERE IS MUCH STILL TO BE DONE!


THE CREATURES INSIDE IT WERE WELL-SATISFIED WITH THEIR FIENDISH WORK...

AND SO THE FIENDS FROM GALLAS DEPARTED, LEAVING TRIGAN A CITY OF TURMOIL WHERE EVERY MAN SOUGHT TO DESTROY HIS FRIEND...
...AND TRIGO AND BRAG LAY WHERE THEY HAD FALLEN.

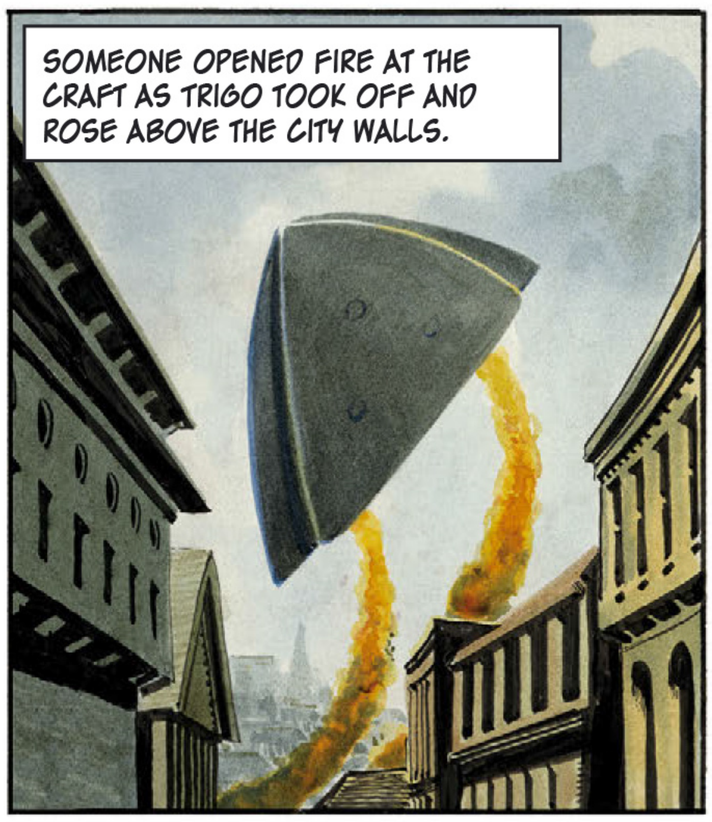
IN THE MAIN SQUARE OF TRIGAN, THE PEOPLE FOUGHT EACH OTHER... BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER AND FRIEND AGAINST FRIEND... TO THE DEATH!

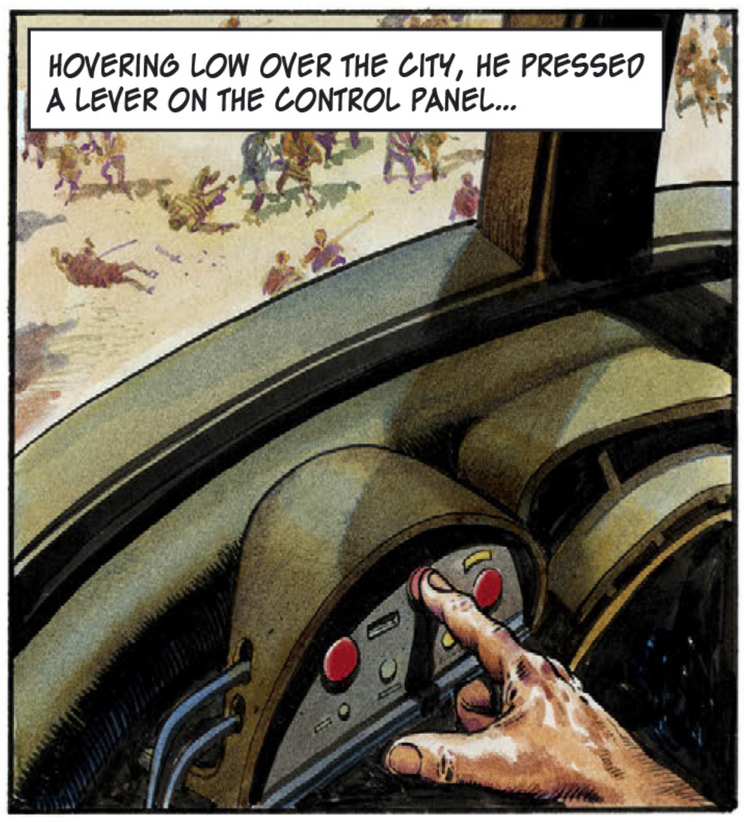
JANNO, THE NEPHEW OF TRIGO THE RULER, WAS LOCKED IN MORTAL COMBAT WITH HIS BEST FRIEND, KEREN...

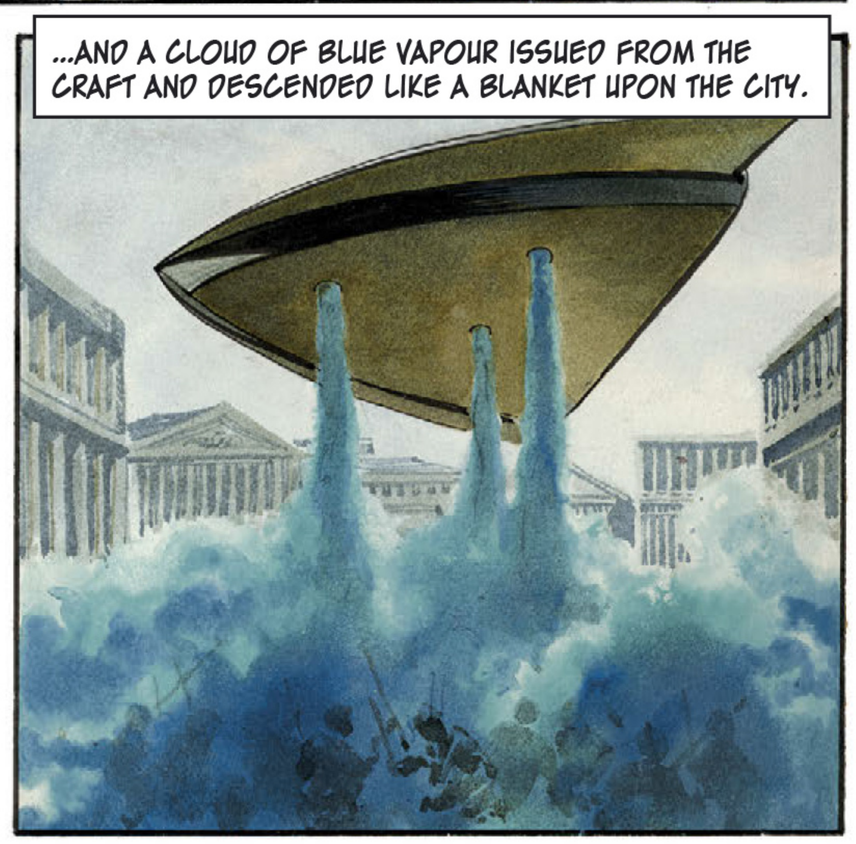

TRIGO HAD BEEN UNCONSCIOUS SINCE THE STRANGE FORCE HAD BENT THE MINDS OF THE TRIGANS AND HE HAD BEEN UNAFFECTED BY THE EVIL INFLUENCE... TOWARDS DAWN HE RECOVERED AND SAW HIS BROTHER, BRAG, LYING THERE...
HIS HEART IS STILL BEATING... WHAT IS THAT TURMOIL IN THE SQUARE?

HE STAGGERED TO HIS FEET AND LOOKED OUT.
BY THE STARS... MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYING THEMSELVES!

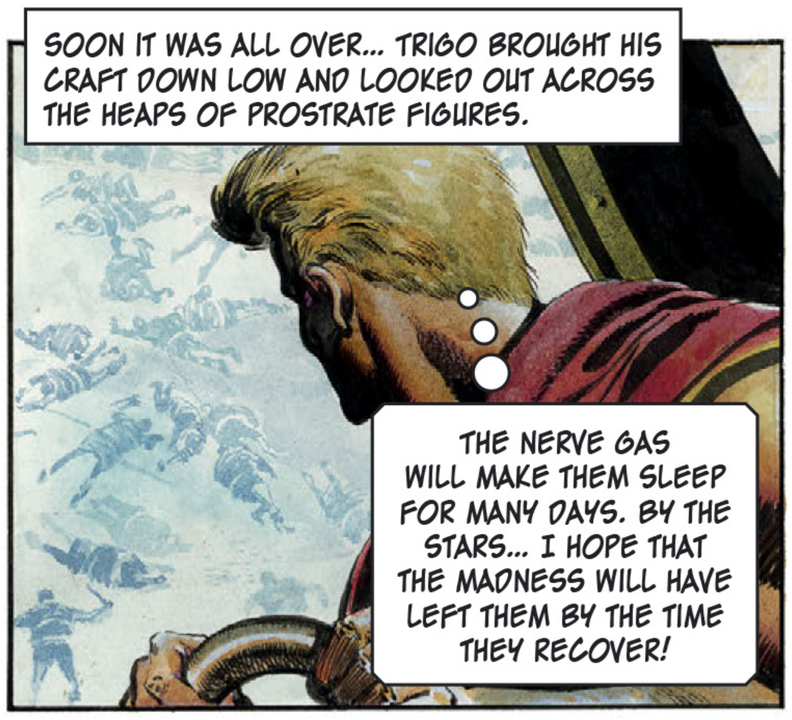
HIS PERSONAL ATMOSPHERE CRAFT LAY AT THE FAR END OF THE SQUARE. ARMING HIMSELF WITH A SWORD, THE LEADER OF TRIGAN FOUGHT HIS WAY THROUGH THE HACKING, STABBING MULTITUDE TO THE CRAFT...
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP THIS CARNAGE!

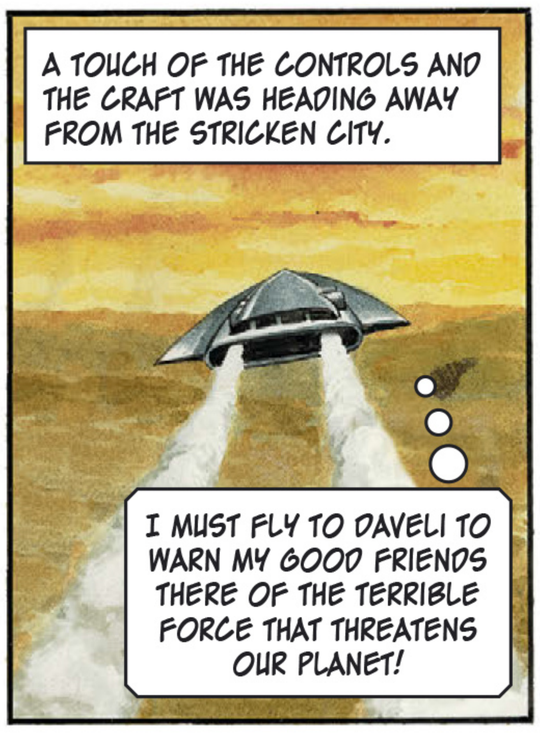

SOMEONE OPENED FIRE AT THE CRAFT AS TRIGO TOOK OFF AND ROSE ABOVE THE CITY WALLS.


HOVERING LOW OVER THE CITY, HE PRESSED A LEVER ON THE CONTROL PANEL...

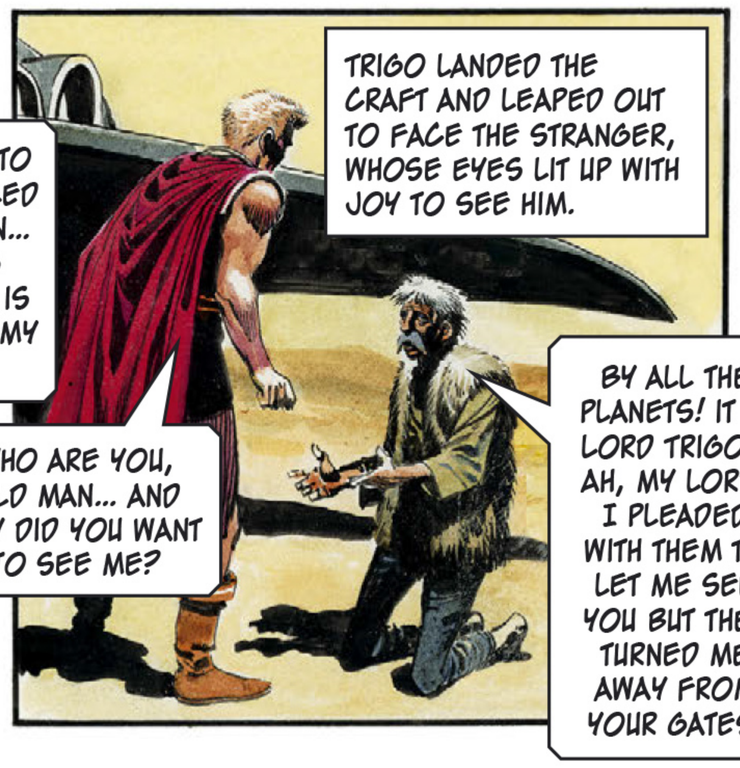

...AND A CLOUD OF BLUE VAPOUR ISSUED FROM THE CRAFT AND DESCENDED LIKE A BLANKET UPON THE CITY.

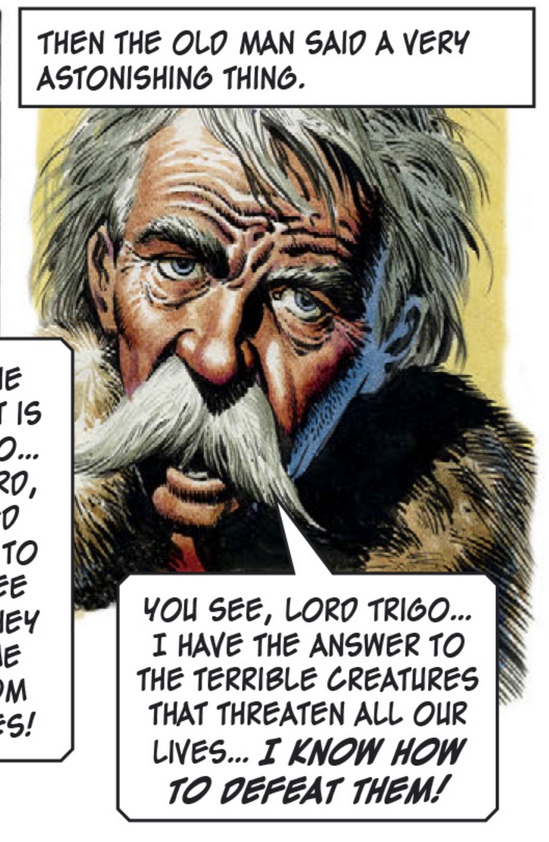
DOWN IN THE STREETS OF TRIGAN, BATTLING MEN STOPPED IN MID-STROKE AND PITCHED SENSELESS TO THE GROUND AT THE FIRST BREATH OF THE BLUE VAPOUR.


SOON IT WAS ALL OVER... TRIGO BROUGHT HIS CRAFT DOWN LOW AND LOOKED OUT ACROSS THE HEAPS OF PROSTRATE FIGURES.
THE NERVE GAS WILL MAKE THEM SLEEP FOR MANY DAYS. BY THE STARS... I HOPE THAT THE MADNESS WILL HAVE LEFT THEM BY THE TIME THEY RECOVER!

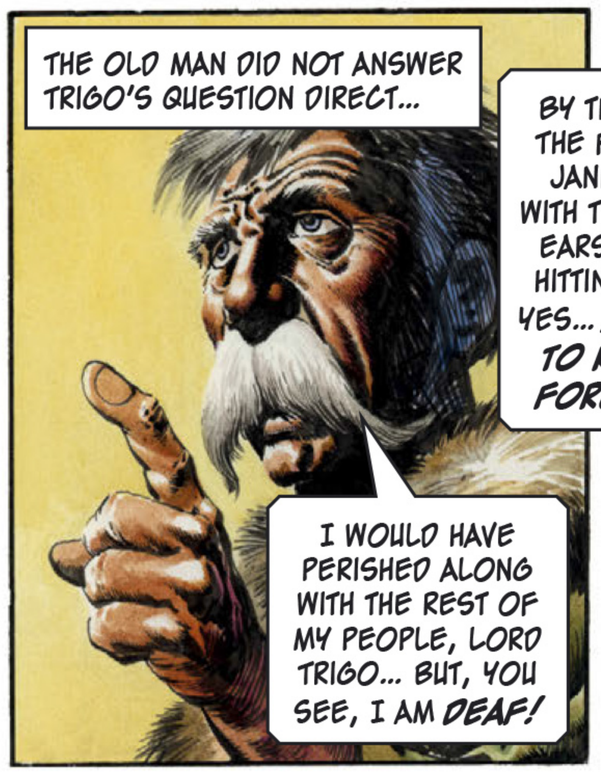

A TOUCH OF THE CONTROLS AND THE CRAFT WAS HEADING AWAY FROM THE STRICKEN CITY.
I MUST FLY TO DAVELI TO WARN MY GOOD FRIENDS THERE OF THE TERRIBLE FORCE THAT THREATENS OUR PLANET!

SOON, HE SAW A SOLITARY FIGURE MOVING ACROSS THE DESOLATE PLAIN OF VORG.
HE APPEARS TO HAVE TRAVELLED FROM TRIGAN... BUT BY HIS CLOTHES HE IS NOT ONE OF MY PEOPLE.


TRIGO LANDED THE CRAFT AND LEAPED OUT TO FACE THE STRANGER, WHOSE EYES LIT UP WITH JOY TO SEE HIM.
WHO ARE YOU, OLD MAN... AND WHY DID YOU WANT TO SEE ME?
BY ALL THE PLANETS! IT IS LORD TRIGO... AH, MY LORD, I PLEADED WITH THEM TO LET ME SEE YOU BUT THEY TURNED ME AWAY FROM YOUR GATES!

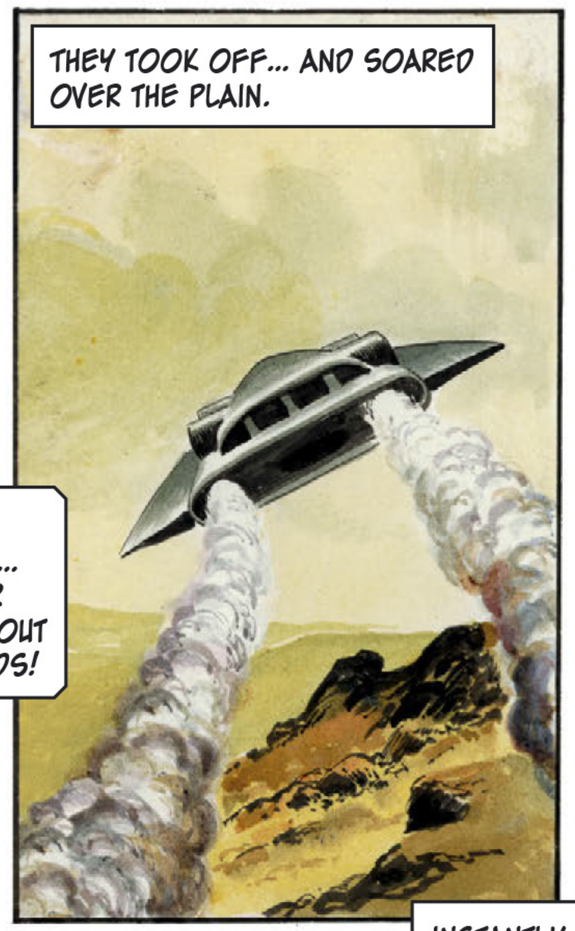

THEN THE OLD MAN SAID A VERY ASTONISHING THING.
YOU SEE, LORD TRIGO... I HAVE THE ANSWER TO THE TERRIBLE CREATURES THAT THREATEN ALL OUR LIVES... I KNOW HOW TO DEFEAT THEM!

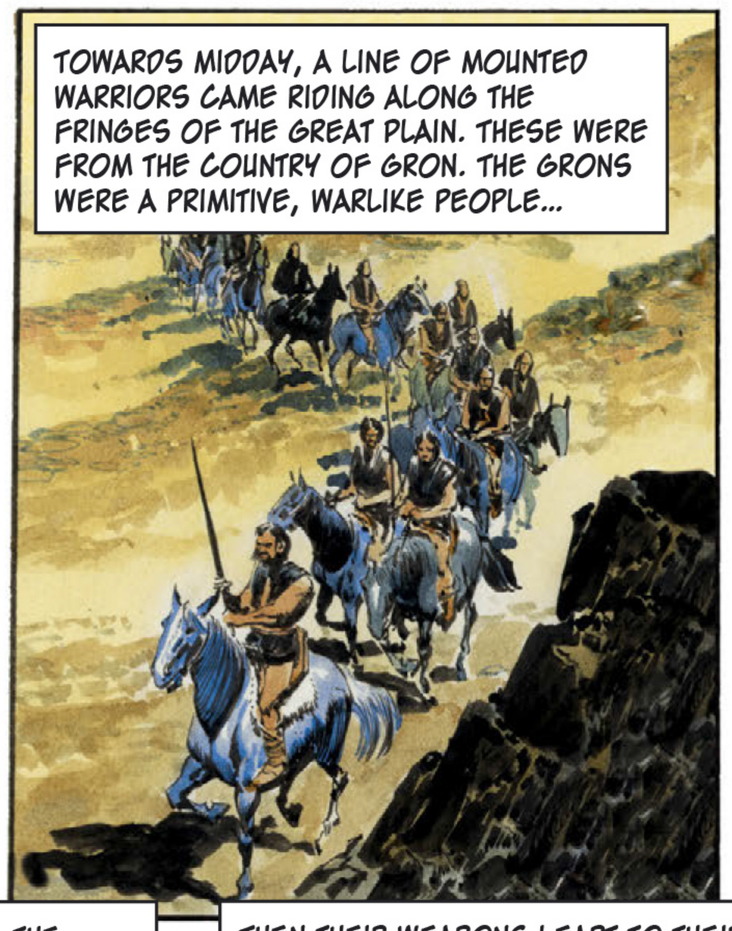
TRIGO STARED DISBELIEVINGLY AT THE PATHETIC OLD MAN...
HOW CAN A HELPLESS OLD MAN LIKE YOU KNOW HOW TO DEFEAT THE STRANGE FORCE THAT THREATENS OUR PLANET?

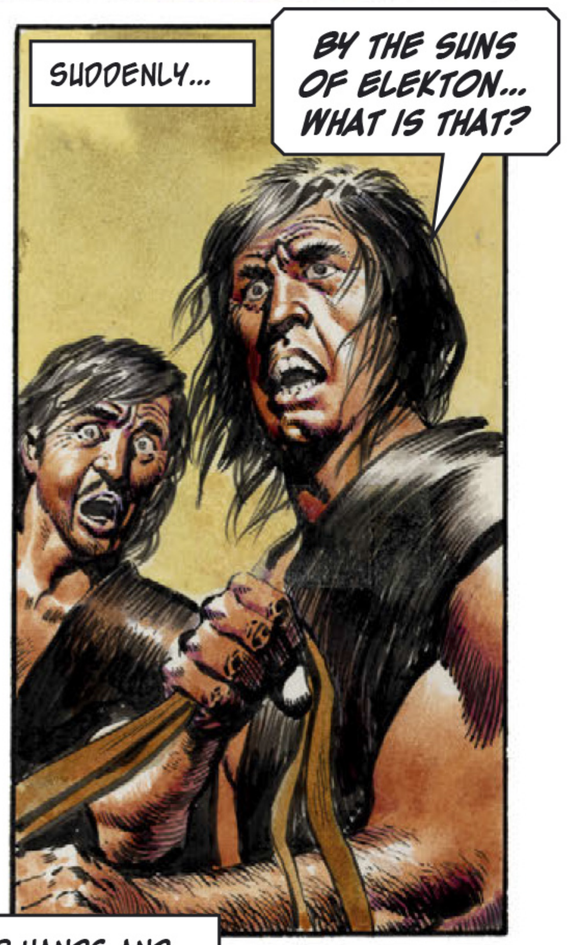

THE OLD MAN DID NOT ANSWER TRIGO'S QUESTION DIRECT...
I WOULD HAVE PERISHED ALONG WITH THE REST OF MY PEOPLE, LORD TRIGO... BUT, YOU SEE, I AM DEAF!

THEN TRIGO KNEW HE HAD THE ANSWER!
BY THE PLANETS, THAT'S IT! THE FIRST TIME MY NEPHEW JANNO CAME IN CONTACT WITH THE STRANGE FORCE HIS EARS WERE SINGING FROM HITTING HIS HEAD IN A FALL! YES... ALL ONE HAS TO DO TO RESIST THE DEADLY FORCE IS TO BE DEAF!

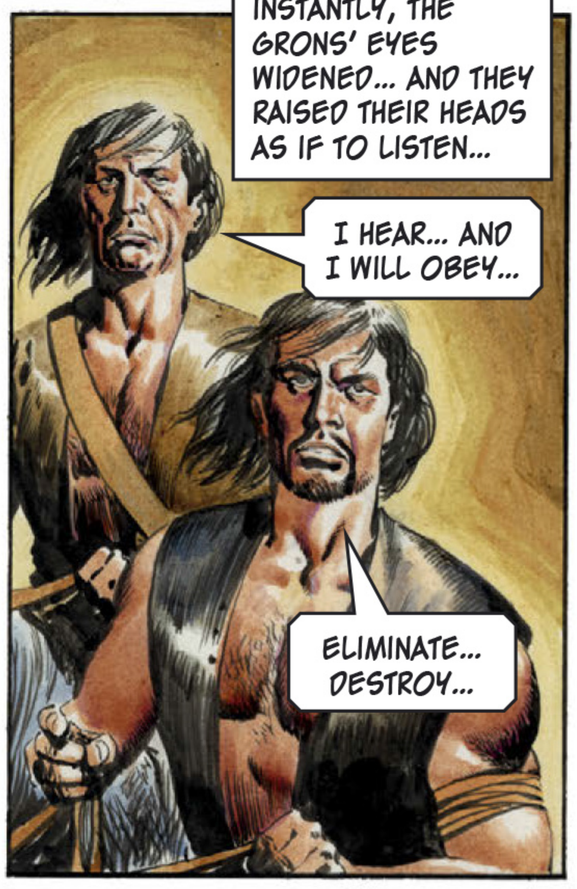
SEIZING THE OLD MAN'S ARM, HE PULLED HIM TOWARDS HIS ATMOSPHERE CRAFT...
COME, MY FRIEND... TOGETHER WE'LL SEEK OUT THOSE FIENDS!


THEY TOOK OFF... AND SOARED OVER THE PLAIN.


TOWARDS MIDDAY, A LINE OF MOUNTED WARRIORS CAME RIDING ALONG THE FRINGES OF THE GREAT PLAIN. THESE WERE FROM THE COUNTRY OF GRON. THE GRONS WERE A PRIMITIVE, WARLIKE PEOPLE...

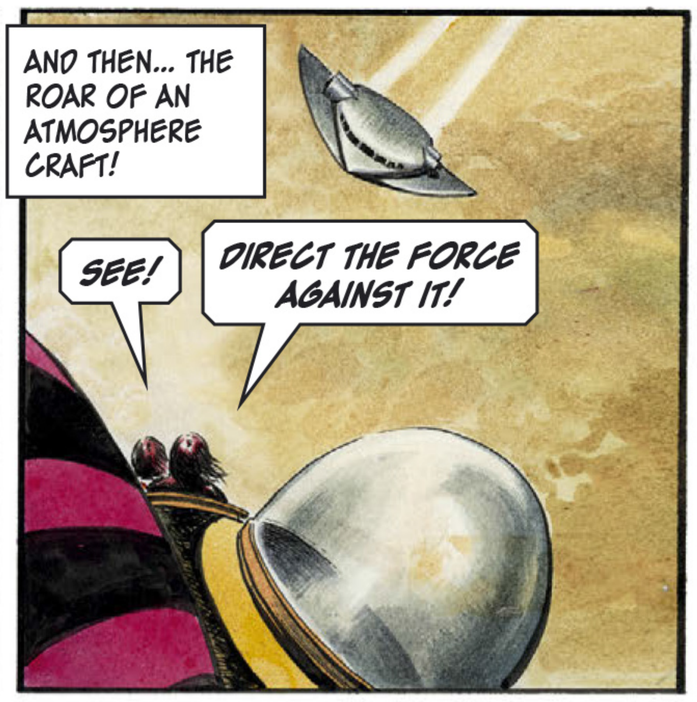

SUDDENLY...
BY THE SUNS OF ELEKTON... WHAT IS THAT?

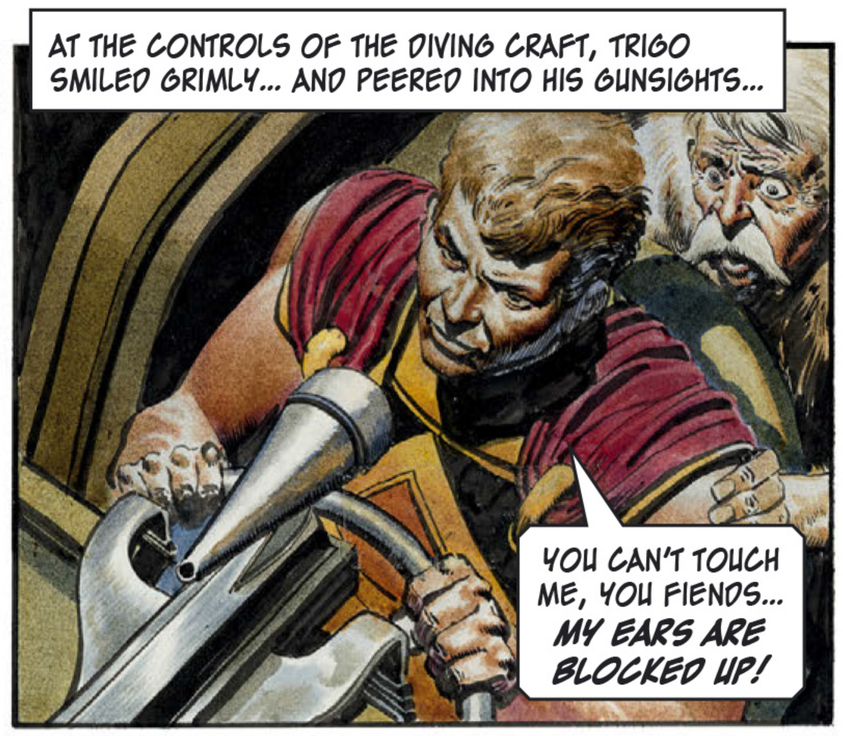
COMING TOWARDS THEM WAS A STRANGE SHAPE...
...AND THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH AN EERIE HUMMING SOUND!

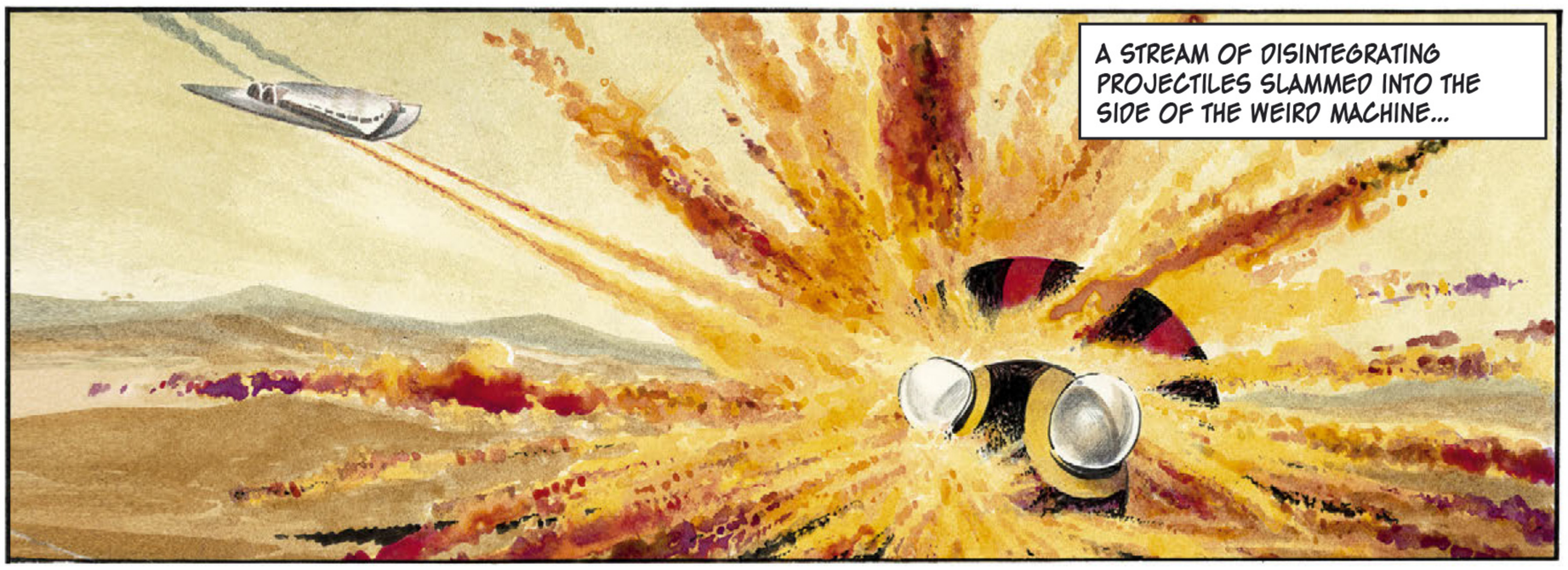

INSTANTLY, THE GRONS' EYES WIDENED... AND THEY RAISED THEIR HEADS AS IF TO LISTEN...
I HEAR... AND I WILL OBEY...
ELIMINATE... DESTROY...

THEN THEIR WEAPONS LEAPT TO THEIR HANDS AND THEY BEGAN FIGHTING AGAINST EACH OTHER... FATHER AGAINST SON... FRIEND AGAINST FRIEND!
DESTROY ALL!
ELIMINATE... AAAAAAGH!

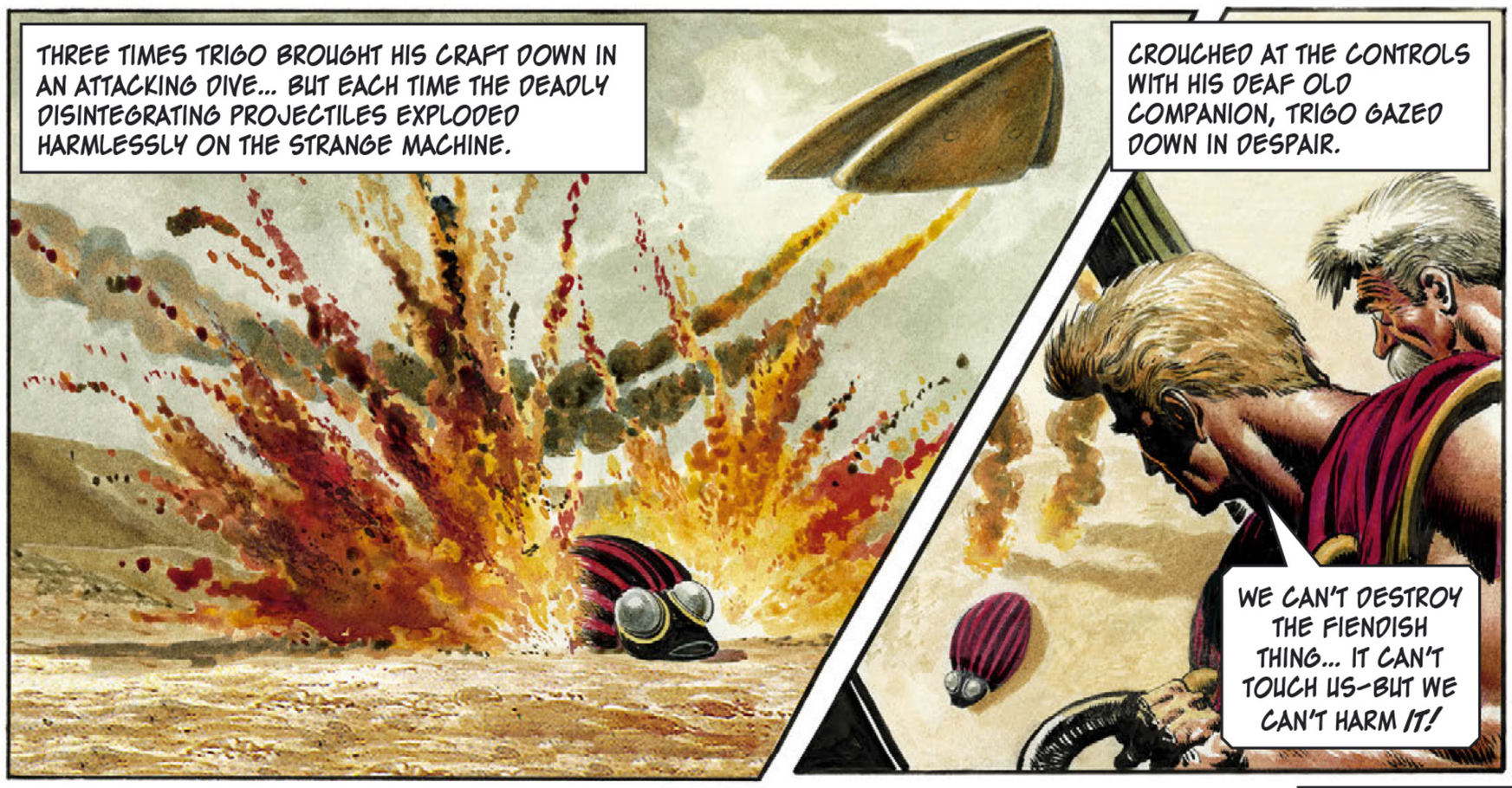
FROM THE WEIRD MACHINE, THE STRANGE CREATURES WATCHED WITH SATISFACTION...
IT IS WELL DONE...
SOON THE PLANET ELEKTON WILL BE OURS!

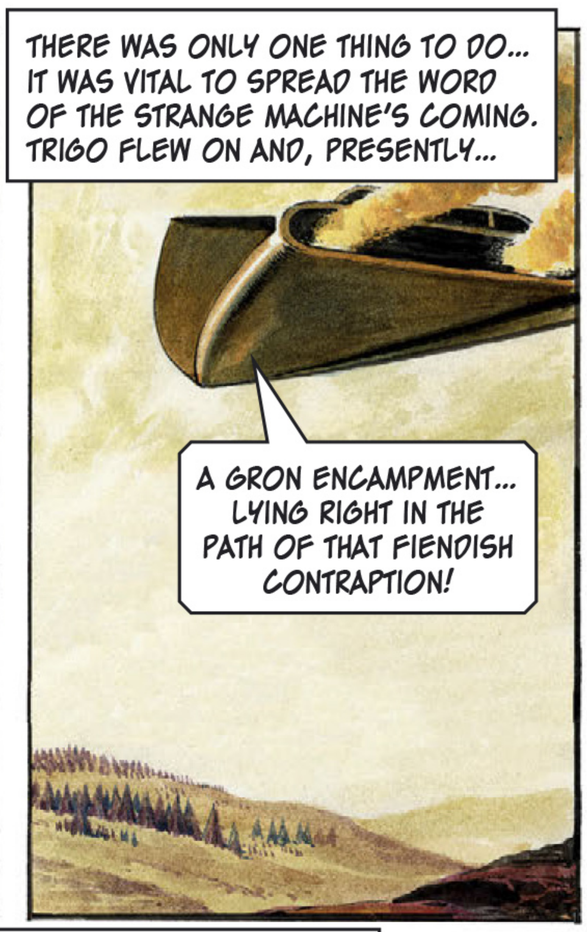

AND THEN... THE ROAR OF AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT!
SEE!
DIRECT THE FORCE AGAINST IT!


AT THE CONTROLS OF THE DIVING CRAFT, TRIGO SMILED GRIMLY... AND PEERED INTO HIS GUNSIGHTS...
YOU CAN'T TOUCH ME, YOU FIENDS... MY EARS ARE BLOCKED UP!


A STREAM OF DISINTEGRATING PROJECTILES SLAMMED INTO THE SIDE OF THE WEIRD MACHINE...

MY FIRE IS HAVING NO EFFECT!


THREE TIMES TRIGO BROUGHT HIS CRAFT DOWN IN AN ATTACKING DIVE... BUT EACH TIME THE DEADLY DISINTEGRATING PROJECTILES EXPLODED HARMLESSLY ON THE STRANGE MACHINE.
CROUCHED AT THE CONTROLS WITH HIS DEAF OLD COMPANION, TRIGO GAZED DOWN IN DESPAIR.
WE CAN'T DESTROY THE FIENDISH THING... IT CAN'T TOUCH US-BUT WE CAN'T HARM IT!


THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING TO DO... IT WAS VITAL TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE STRANGE MACHINE'S COMING. TRIGO FLEW ON AND, PRESENTLY...
A GRON ENCAMPMENT... LYING RIGHT IN THE PATH OF THAT FIENDISH CONTRAPTION!

THE WARLIKE, NOMADIC GRONS GATHERED AROUND, WEAPONS AT THE READY, AS THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT DESCENDED IN THEIR MIDST.
IT IS A TRIGAN CRAFT!

AS TRIGO DESCENDED FROM HIS CRAFT HE WAS INSTANTLY SURROUNDED AND THE GRON CHIEF ADDRESSED HIM SAVAGELY.
TRIGO HIMSELF! YOU ARE NO FRIEND OF THE GRONS, LORD TRIGO... ARE YOU SO TIRED OF LIVING THAT YOU DARE SET FOOT IN OUR ENCAMPMENT?
I HAVE COME TO SAVE YOU FROM DESTRUCTION!

SWIFTLY, TRIGO EXPLAINED... AND THE GRON LAUGHED SCORNFULLY.
CREATURES FROM ANOTHER PLANET WHO WILL MAKE US DESTROY EACH OTHER? HA! LORD TRIGO HAS TAKEN LEAVE OF HIS SENSES.
A SHORT WHILE AGO I SAW A PARTY OF YOUR WARRIORS DESTROY EACH OTHER IN THIS MANNER... PERHAPS YOU WILL THINK THAT FUNNY ALSO!

THE GRON CHIEF'S FACE DARKENED WITH FURY.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? MY ONLY SON WAS WITH THAT PARTY!
THEN I AM SORRY FOR YOU... YOU NO LONGER HAVE A SON!

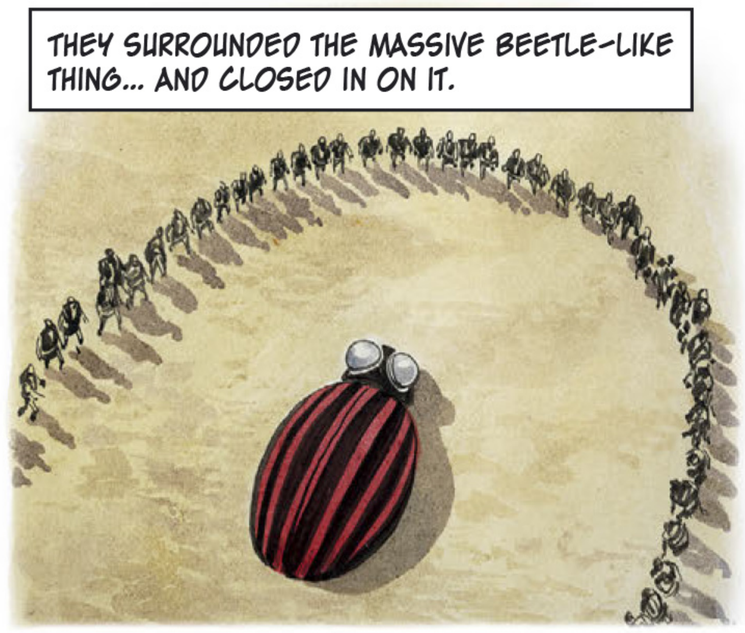
THE GRONS WERE CONVINCED.
LEAD US TO THIS STRANGE MACHINE, LORD TRIGO!
WE'LL SEE IF IT CAN WITHSTAND THE IMPACT OF GRON BLADES!
A GRON WARRIOR DOES NOT FLEE!
IT'S NO USE! THE THING RESISTS EVEN MY DISINTEGRATOR PROJECTILES. YOUR ONLY HOPE IS TO STOP UP YOUR EARS... OR FLEE!

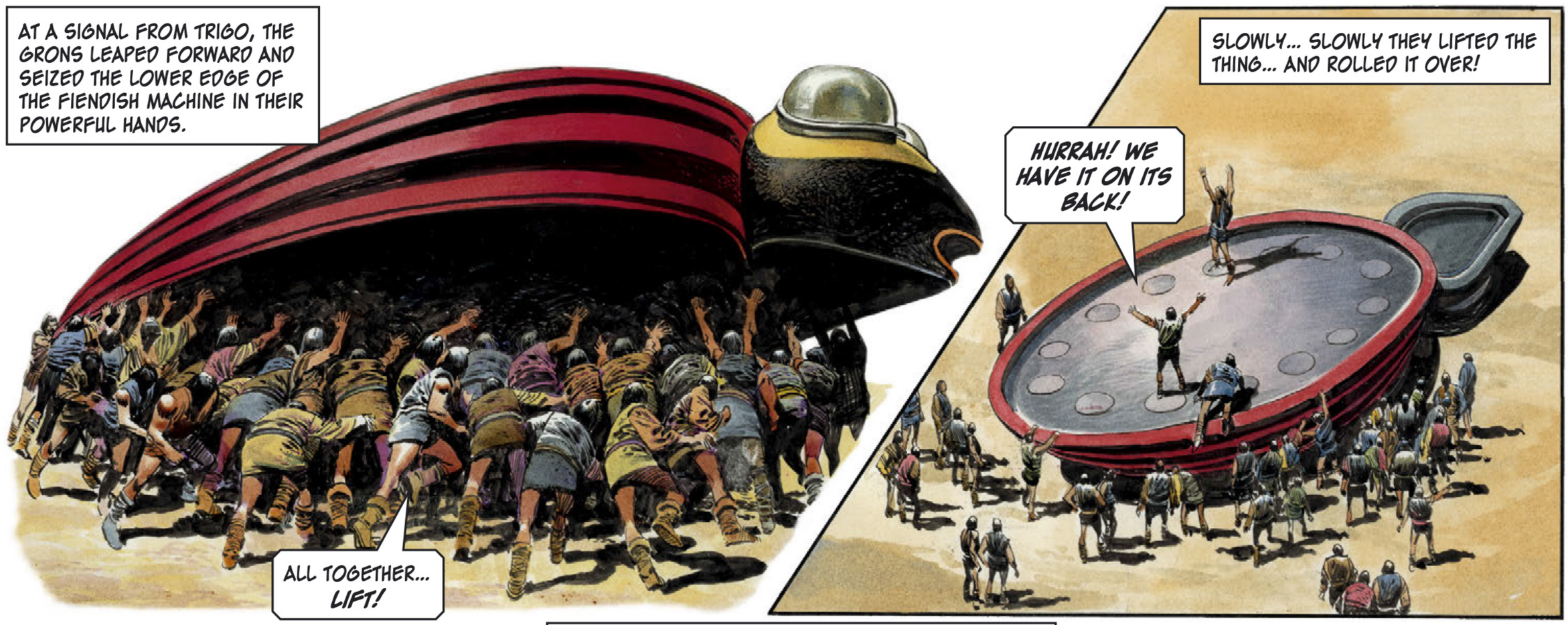
AS HE SAT THERE IN DESPAIR, TRIGO SAW SOMETHING AT HIS FEET...
WAIT!

HE POINTED EXCITEDLY...
THERE! IN THE DUST! THE ANSWER!
WHY... IT'S ONLY A BEETLE...

LYING IN THE DUST ON ITS BACK, A COMMON BEETLE WAS STRIVING UNSUCCESSFULLY TO RIGHT ITSELF...
THE BEETLE IS SHAPED EXACTLY LIKE THE FIENDISH MACHINE!
YOU MEAN...?
A HUNDRED MEN-STRONG, FEARLESS MEN-WITH THEIR EARS STOPPED UP...!

TRIGO HIMSELF STRODE AT THE HEAD OF THE HUNDRED BURLY GRON WARRIORS WHO WENT OUT TO MEET THE FIENDISH MACHINE...
THERE!

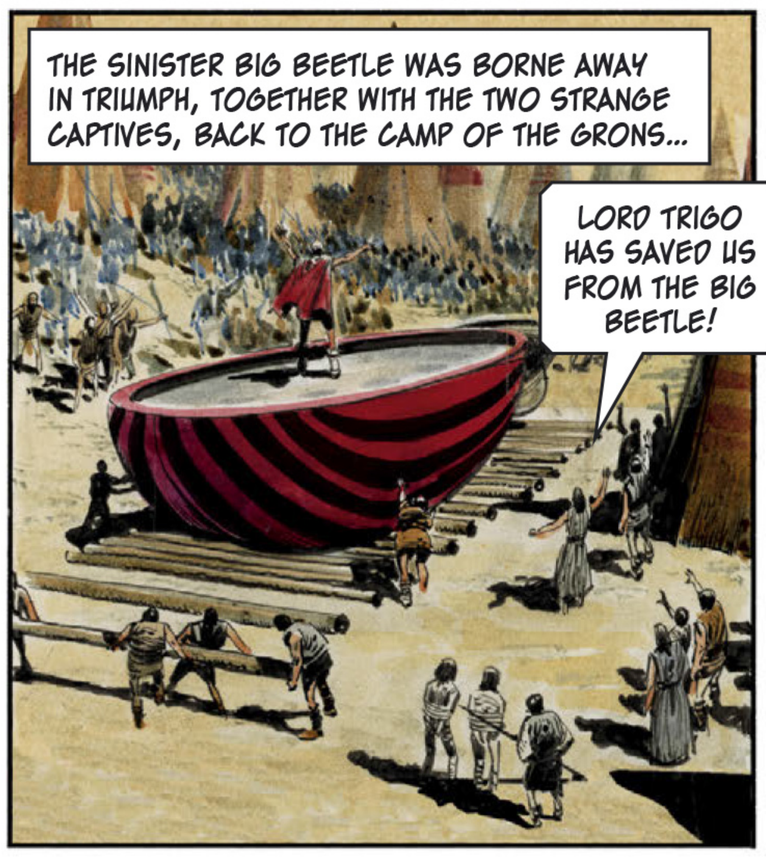

THEY SURROUNDED THE MASSIVE BEETLE-LIKE THING... AND CLOSED IN ON IT.


AT A SIGNAL FROM TRIGO, THE GRONS LEAPED FORWARD AND SEIZED THE LOWER EDGE OF THE FIENDISH MACHINE IN THEIR POWERFUL HANDS.
ALL TOGETHER... LIFT!
SLOWLY... SLOWLY THEY LIFTED THE THING... AND ROLLED IT OVER!
HURRAH! WE HAVE IT ON ITS BACK!

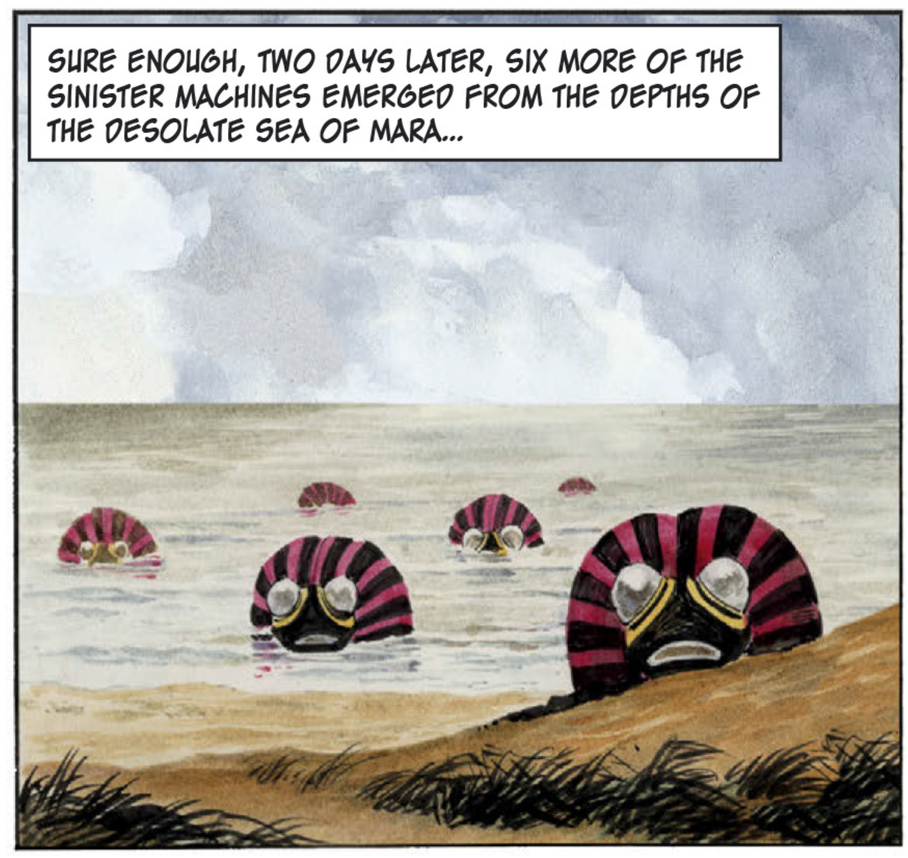
THEN FOLLOWED NERVE-SEARING MOMENTS WHILE THE THING STRAINED AND HEAVED TO RIGHT ITSELF... BUT THEN IT LAY STILL.
THE BIG BEETLE IS HELPLESS!
LONG LIVE TRIGO... LONG LIVE THE GRONS!

THEN AN AWE-STRICKEN HUSH FELL UPON THE GRONS AS THE HATCHWAY SWUNG OPEN... AND TWO SINISTER CREATURES CAME OUT INTO THE SUNLIGHT!
THE GRONS FELL BACK IN TERROR- BUT TRIGO STOOD HIS GROUND.

THEN A STRANGE THING HAPPENED... THE WEIRD CREATURES FELL ON THEIR KNEES BEFORE THE RULER OF TRIGAN IN THE UNIVERSAL ATTITUDE OF SURRENDER!
THEY ARE BEATEN!
LONG LIVE LORD TRIGO!


THE SINISTER BIG BEETLE WAS BORNE AWAY IN TRIUMPH, TOGETHER WITH THE TWO STRANGE CAPTIVES, BACK TO THE CAMP OF THE GRONS...
LORD TRIGO HAS SAVED US FROM THE BIG BEETLE!

BUT TRIGO'S FINE EYES NARROWED THOUGHTFULLY...
I MUST MAKE SWIFT PREPARATION... THERE MAY BE OTHER BIG BEETLES TO CONTEND WITH!


SURE ENOUGH, TWO DAYS LATER, SIX MORE OF THE SINISTER MACHINES EMERGED FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE DESOLATE SEA OF MARA...

LIKE THE FIRST, THEY HAD EARLY SUCCESS WITH THE EVIL FORCE THAT RADIATED FROM THEM... AT THE SOUND OF THE STRANGE HUMMING NOISE, PEOPLE WERE DRIVEN TO DESTROY EVERY LIVING THING IN SIGHT...

I HEAR... AND I WILL OBEY...

DESTROY... ELIMINATE!

BUT TRIGO HAD GATHERED A LARGE ARMY OF FOLLOWERS, ALL STRONG MEN WITH THEIR EARS BLOCKED UP TO SHUT OUT THE DEADLY SOUND. ONE BY ONE, THEY HUNTED DOWN THE BIG BEETLES... AND OVERTURNED THEM.

ONE MORE DESTROYED! LONG LIVE LORD TRIGO!

NOT TILL ALL THE BIG BEETLES WERE RENDERED HARMLESS DID TRIGO RETURN TO HIS CITY, WHERE HE FOUND HIS PEOPLE RECOVERED FROM THEIR NIGHTMARE EXPERIENCE. HE WAS GREETED BY HIS WOUNDED BROTHER, BRAG, AND HIS NEPHEW, JANNO...

THE NIGHTMARE IS OVER, BRAG!

THANKS TO YOU, BROTHER... ALL ELEKTON IS IN YOUR DEBT!

THE WISE OLD PERIC EXAMINED THE STRANGE PRISONERS AND WAS SOON ABLE TO EXPLAIN THEIR ORIGINS TO TRIGO.

MANY CENTURIES AGO, THE PEOPLE LIVING ON GALLAS KNEW THAT THEIR SMALL PLANET WAS FATED TO COLLIDE WITH ELEKTON, SO THEY MADE THEIR PREPARATIONS TO CONQUER ELEKTON ON THEIR ARRIVAL... THEY SEALED SEVEN OF THE BIG BEETLES FAR BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE PLANET...

...AND THEY NEARLY SUCCEEDED IN THEIR TERRIBLE PLAN TO MAKE US DESTROY OURSELVES WITH OUR OWN HANDS!

THEY DID INDEED! ELEKTON MUST NEVER FORGET THE NARROW ESCAPE IT HAD!

ON THE SHORES OF THE SEA OF MARA – WHERE PART OF THE SUBMERGED MOON GALLAS WAS TO BE SEEN RISING ABOVE THE DARK WATERS–THE PEOPLE OF ELEKTON RAISED A MONUMENT OF REMEMBRANCE...

IT WAS A CARVED BEETLE, KICKING ITS LEGS IN A VAIN ATTEMPT TO RIGHT ITSELF...

V

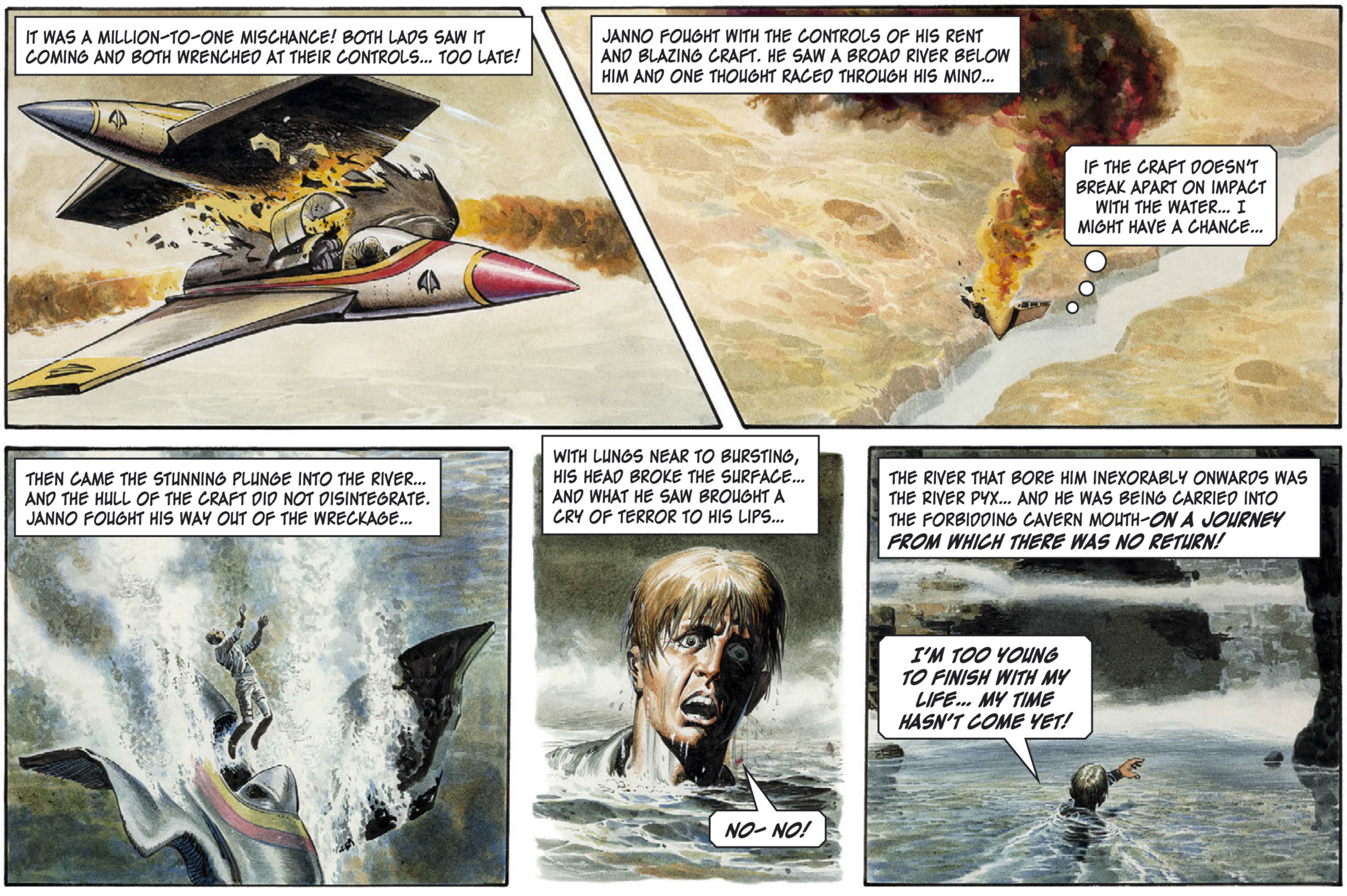
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE LAND OF NO RETURN

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 238 – 242

6th August – 3rd September 1966

TRIGO, THE RULER OF TRIGAN, LOOKED UP ONE DAY TO SEE THE WISE OLD PERIC STANDING BEFORE HIM. THE OLD MAN'S FACE WAS STRANGELY SAD...
LORD TRIGO... I REGRET TO SAY THAT I SHALL BE LEAVING YOU SOON.
TRIGO KNEW INSTANTLY WHAT PERIC MEANT.
YOU FEEL THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO DEPART ON THE JOURNEY OF NO RETURN... THE VOYAGE TO HELLAS?
YES, LORD TRIGO. YOU HAVE PAID ME WELL FOR MY SERVICES... I SHALL BE ABLE TO AFFORD A SPLENDID CRAFT...
I AM GROWING OLD AND I WOULD LIKE TO SPEND MY LAST DAYS IN THE BEAUTIFUL LAND OF HELLAS WHERE THERE IS NO PAIN AND STRIFE... ONLY PEACE AND CONTENTMENT...
FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL THE PEOPLE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON HAD BELIEVED IN THE BEAUTIFUL LAND OF HELLAS... AND IT WAS EVERY ELEKTONS' AMBITION TO BE ABLE TO AFFORD THE TRADITIONAL JEWEL-ENCRUSTED BOAT IN WHICH TO MAKE THE JOURNEY WHEN HE GREW OLD...
THE FINEST HELLAS BOAT WE HAVE EVER BUILT.
FIT FOR PERIC, WHO HAS SERVED LORD TRIGO LONG AND WELL.
CAME THE DAY WHEN PERIC BADE A SAD FAREWELL TO HIS RULER AND HIS LOVED ONES AND BOARDED HIS HELLAS BOAT ON THE MYSTERIOUS RIVER PYX...
FAREWELL, OLD FRIEND... MAY YOU STILL BE THERE TO GREET ME WHEN I, TOO, MAKE THE JOURNEY OF NO RETURN!
GOODBYE... GOODBYE...
NO NEED FOR SAIL OR OARS... THE RIVER PYX CARRIED THE HELLAS BOAT CONTAINING PERIC AND ALL HIS WEALTH IN ITS SWIFT-FLOWING CURRENT.
HE CAME AT LENGTH TO A VAST CAVERN INTO WHICH THE RIVER FLOWED. IT WAS AN AWE-INSPIRING SIGHT AND PERIC'S COURAGE NEARLY FAILED HIM... BUT HE HAD THE ANCIENT ELEKTON BELIEF TO SUSTAIN HIM...
BEYOND LIES THE LAND OF HELLAS... THE BEAUTIFUL LAND...
A YEAR PASSED, AND WISE OLD PERIC PASSED INTO MEMORY. ONE MORNING, TRIGO'S NEPHEW JANNO AND HIS FRIEND KEREN BOARDED THEIR ATMOSPHERE CRAFTS.
WE'LL HAVE A MOCK BATTLE IN THE SKY!
I WAGER I'LL BEAT YOU!
SOON, THE HIGH-SPIRITED LADS WERE SOARING FAR ABOVE THE PLAIN OF VORG... AND JANNO GRINNED TO HIMSELF...
HE'S GOING TO ATTACK ME... BUT I'LL TURN AND MEET HIM WITH A COUNTER-ATTACK!


IT WAS A MILLION-TO-ONE MISCHANCE! BOTH LADS SAW IT COMING AND BOTH WRENCHED AT THEIR CONTROLS... TOO LATE!
JANNO FOUGHT WITH THE CONTROLS OF HIS RENT AND BLAZING CRAFT. HE SAW A BROAD RIVER BELOW HIM AND ONE THOUGHT RACED THROUGH HIS MIND...
IF THE CRAFT DOESN'T BREAK APART ON IMPACT WITH THE WATER... I MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE...
THEN CAME THE STUNNING PLUNGE INTO THE RIVER... AND THE HULL OF THE CRAFT DID NOT DISINTEGRATE. JANNO FOUGHT HIS WAY OUT OF THE WRECKAGE...
WITH LUNGS NEAR TO BURSTING, HIS HEAD BROKE THE SURFACE... AND WHAT HE SAW BROUGHT A CRY OF TERROR TO HIS LIPS...
NO- NO!
THE RIVER THAT BORE HIM INEXORABLY ONWARDS WAS THE RIVER PYX... AND HE WAS BEING CARRIED INTO THE FORBIDDING CAVERN MOUTH-ON A JOURNEY FROM WHICH THERE WAS NO RETURN!
I'M TOO YOUNG TO FINISH WITH MY LIFE... MY TIME HASN'T COME YET!

AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT SWOOPED LOW OVER THE MAIN SQUARE AT TRIGAN, TRAILING A PLUME OF SMOKE.
BE READY TO DRAG HIM OUT BEFORE THE CRAFT GOES UP IN FLAMES!
IT'S KEREN! HE'S IN GRAVE TROUBLE!

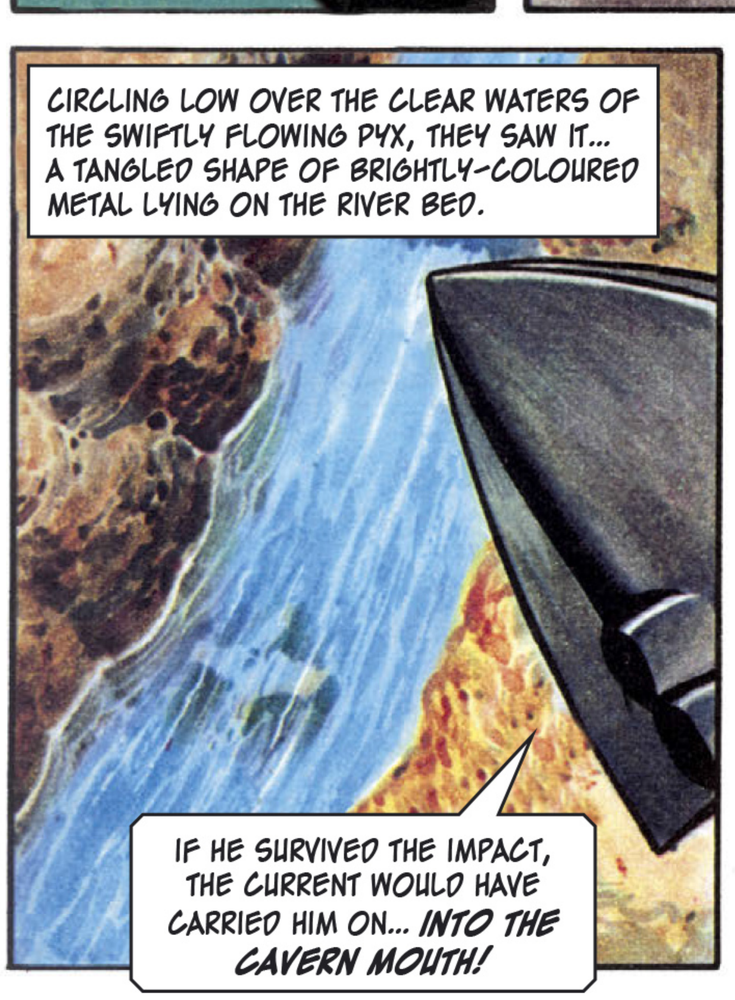
THE CRAFT TORE ITSELF APART ON LANDING BUT WILLING HANDS DRAGGED THE YOUNG PILOT CLEAR BEFORE THE FLAMES COULD ENGULF HIM.
NO! NO...! BETTER THAT I DIE!

LATER HE FELL ON HIS KNEES BEFORE THE RULER OF TRIGAN AND HIS BROTHER BRAG.
LORD TRIGO... LORD BRAG... I HAVE KILLED JANNO, MY BEST FRIEND!

THE FATHER AND THE UNCLE LISTENED IN SHOCKED SILENCE TO THE BOY'S HALTING TALE OF TRAGEDY.
WE WERE FOOLING ABOUT IN THE AIR, MAKING MOCK ATTACKS ON EACH OTHER. IT- IT ALL HAPPENED SO QUICKLY. SUDDENLY THERE WAS A JOLT... AND THEN... I SAW HIM GOING DOWN...

JANNO MAY HAVE SURVIVED THE CRASH. COME WITH ME, KEREN, AND SHOW ME WHERE IT HAPPENED.
IT WAS BRAG WHO HELPED KEREN TO HIS FEET.
DON'T BLAME YOURSELF, LAD. IT WAS A TRAGIC ACCIDENT BUT I DON'T HOLD YOU RESPONSIBLE. I KNOW YOUR GRIEF IS AS GREAT AS MINE.

BUT LATER, HIGH IN THE ATMOSPHERE, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THEIR QUEST WAS HOPELESS.
HE WENT DOWN IN FLAMES... TOWARDS THAT RIVER.
BUT... THAT IS THE RIVER PYX!
THE BROTHERS EXCHANGED A GRIM GLANCE.
THE RIVER OF NO RETURN!
TAKE THE CRAFT LOWER.


CIRCLING LOW OVER THE CLEAR WATERS OF THE SWIFTLY FLOWING PYX, THEY SAW IT... A TANGLED SHAPE OF BRIGHTLY-COLOURED METAL LYING ON THE RIVER BED.
IF HE SURVIVED THE IMPACT, THE CURRENT WOULD HAVE CARRIED HIM ON... INTO THE CAVERN MOUTH!

REMEMBERING THE ANCIENT LEGEND OF ELEKTON, THEY KNEW THEN THAT THEY WOULD NEVER SEE JANNO AMONGST THEM AGAIN.
IF MY SON LIVES, HE IS IN THE BEAUTIFUL LAND OF HELLAS, WHERE THERE IS NO PAIN AND STRIFE... ONLY PEACE AND CONTENTMENT.

MEANWHILE, DEEP IN THE VAST UNDERGROUND CAVERN, JANNO WAS DRAGGING HIMSELF- HALF-DROWNED-FROM THE CHILL WATERS OF THE PYX.
I AM STILL ALIVE... AND IN THE LAND OF HELLAS!

FOR A LONG WHILE HE LAY THERE... TILL HE WAS ROUGHLY AROUSED BY THE TOE OF A HEAVY BOOT!
AAAAGH! WHO... WHO ARE YOU?

COLD, MERCILESS EYES STARED DOWN AT HIM.
HA! THERE'S PEACE AND CONTENTMENT APLENTY FOR YOU, MY LAD!
THIS IS HELLAS... THE LAND OF PEACE AND CONTENTMENT?

JANNO WAS ROUGHLY DRAGGED TO HIS FEET.
TAKE A LOOK AT THE DELIGHTS THAT AWAIT YOU!

JANNO LOOKED. BEFORE HIS APPALLED GAZE, A HOST OF RAGGED AND UNKEMPT SLAVES TOILED AMONGST THE ROCKS, URGED ON BY THEIR GUARDS.

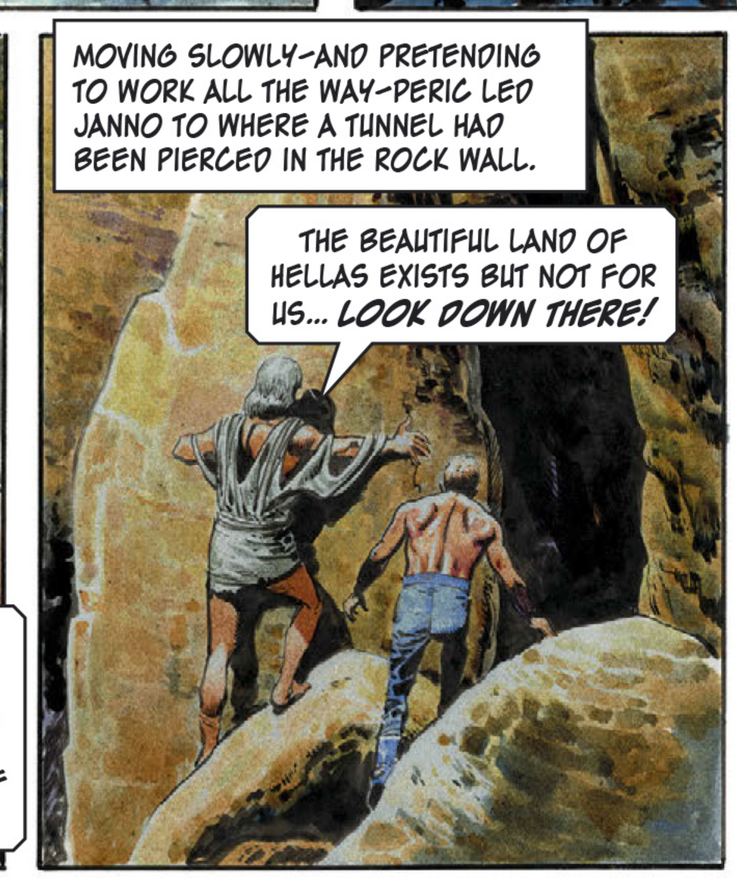
JANNO THOUGHT OF THE ANCIENT LEGEND OF HIS PEOPLE.
NO! THIS ISN'T HELLAS... NOT THE BEAUTIFUL LAND WE HAVE BELIEVED IN FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.
HEH! THEY ALL SAY THE SAME THING. FOR A THOUSAND YEARS THEY'VE BEEN COMING HERE, FULL OF HIGH HOPES—BUT THIS IS THE TRUTH OF IT, LAD! YOU'LL SLAVE LIKE THE REST OF THEM UNTIL YOU DROP!

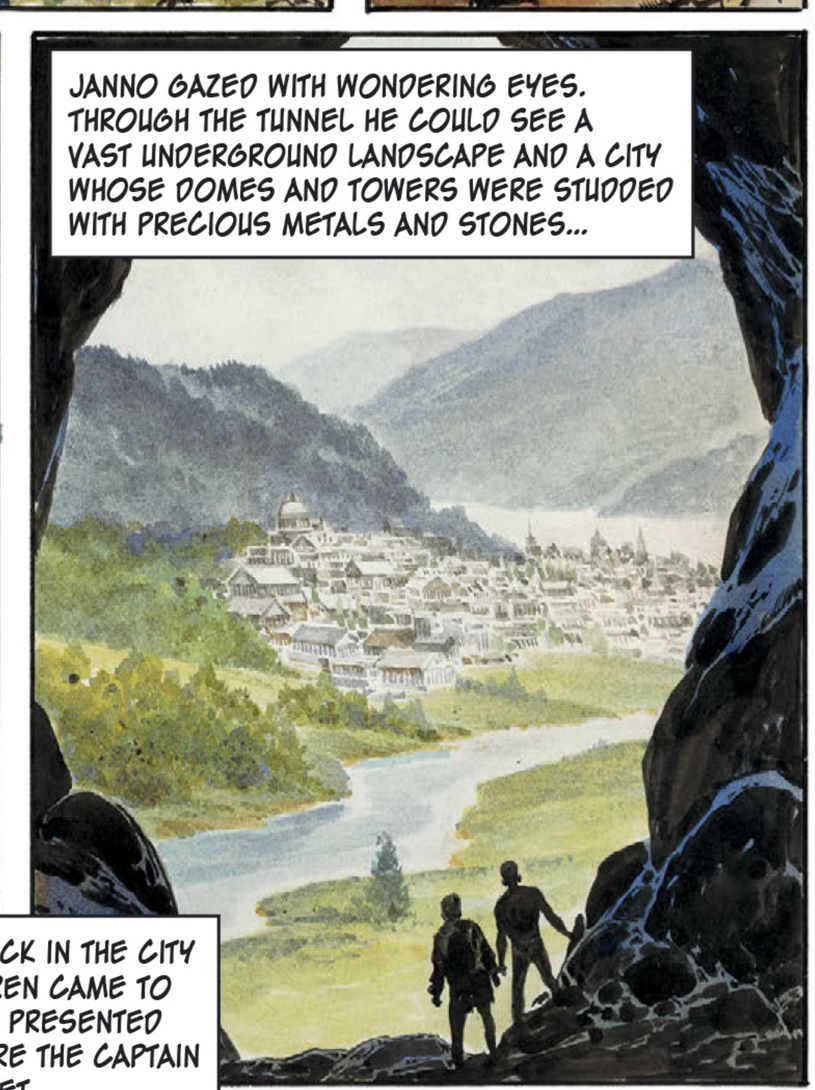
A BLOW FROM THE SHAFT OF A SPEAR SENT JANNO REELING TOWARDS THE TOILING SLAVES.
GET TO WORK... AND WORK TILL YOU DROP!
HE'S THE YOUNGEST WE'VE HAD FOR MANY A YEAR. HE'LL LAST LONGER THAN MOST OF THEM DO.

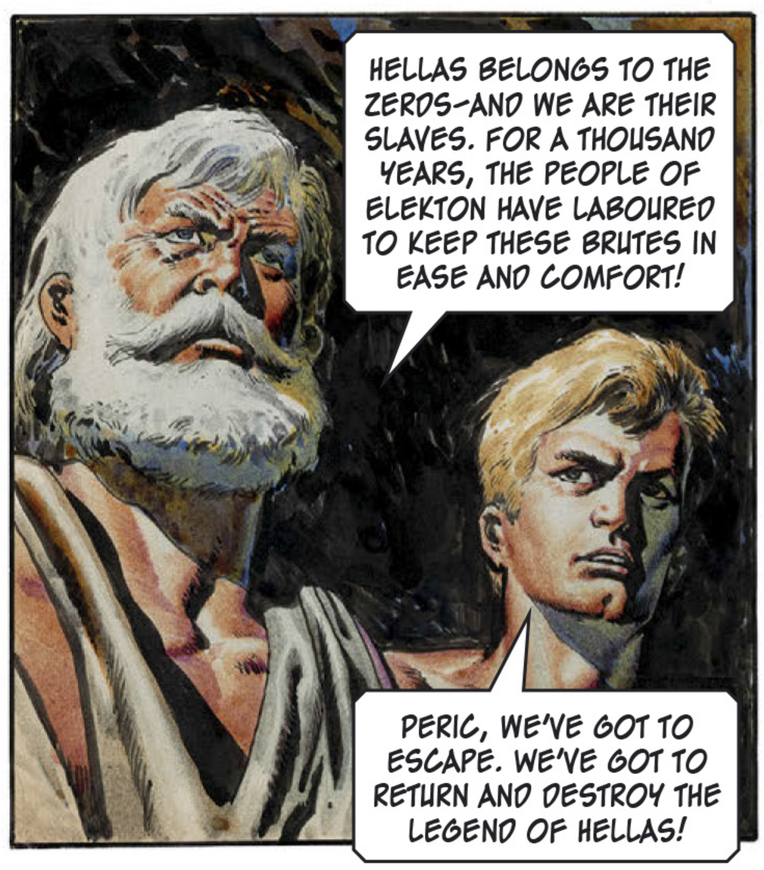
SO JANNO JOINED THE ARMY OF WRETCHED CREATURES WHO WERE DRIVING A TUNNEL THROUGH THE MASSIVE WALL OF ROCK.
AND TO THINK THAT THE PEOPLE OF ELEKTON HAVE BEEN CONDEMNING THEMSELVES TO THIS FOR A THOUSAND YEARS!

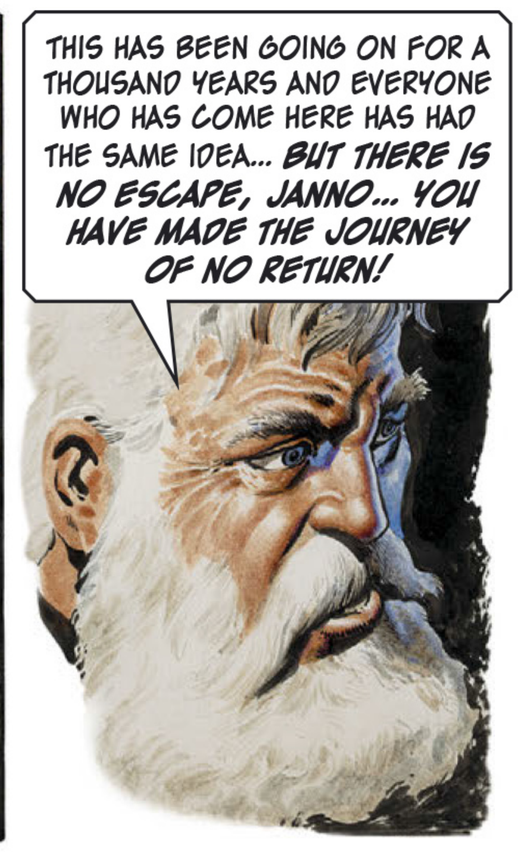
AND THEN-HE HEARD HIS OWN NAME WHISPERED...
JANNO...
BY THE STARS-PERIC!

HE RECOGNISED THE WISE OLD PERIC WHO HAD TAKEN THE JOURNEY OF NO RETURN A YEAR PREVIOUSLY.
KEEP WORKING! I NEVER THOUGHT TO SEE YOU IN THIS ACCURSED PLACE, JANNO. A LAD OF YOUR AGE...
I CAME HERE BY ACCIDENT, PERIC. BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND... CAN THIS REALLY BE THE BEAUTIFUL LAND OF HELLAS?

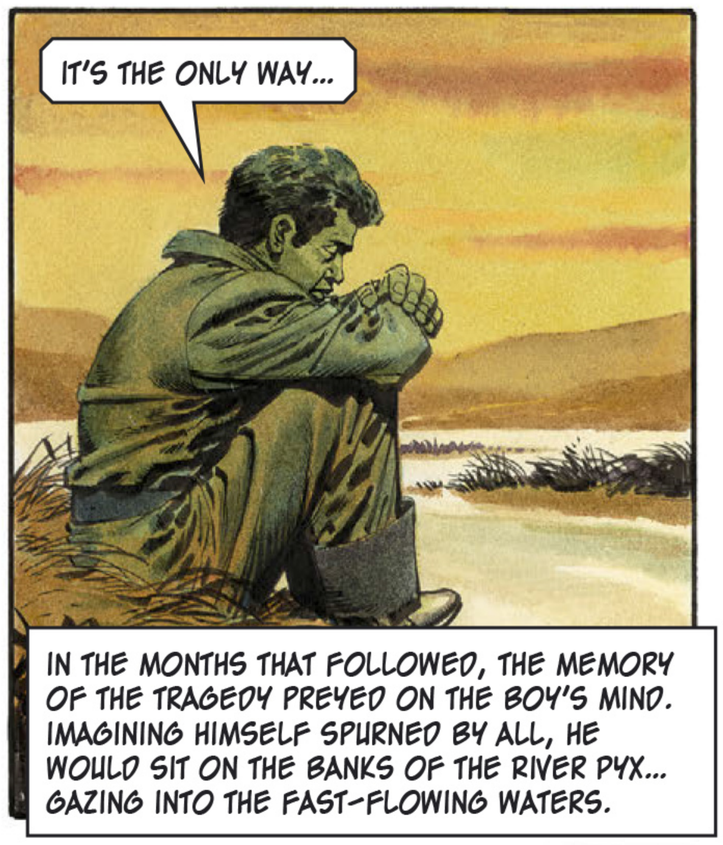

MOVING SLOWLY-AND PRETENDING TO WORK ALL THE WAY-PERIC LED JANNO TO WHERE A TUNNEL HAD BEEN PIERCED IN THE ROCK WALL.
THE BEAUTIFUL LAND OF HELLAS EXISTS BUT NOT FOR US... LOOK DOWN THERE!


JANNO GAZED WITH WONDERING EYES. THROUGH THE TUNNEL HE COULD SEE A VAST UNDERGROUND LANDSCAPE AND A CITY WHOSE DOMES AND TOWERS WERE STUDDED WITH PRECIOUS METALS AND STONES...

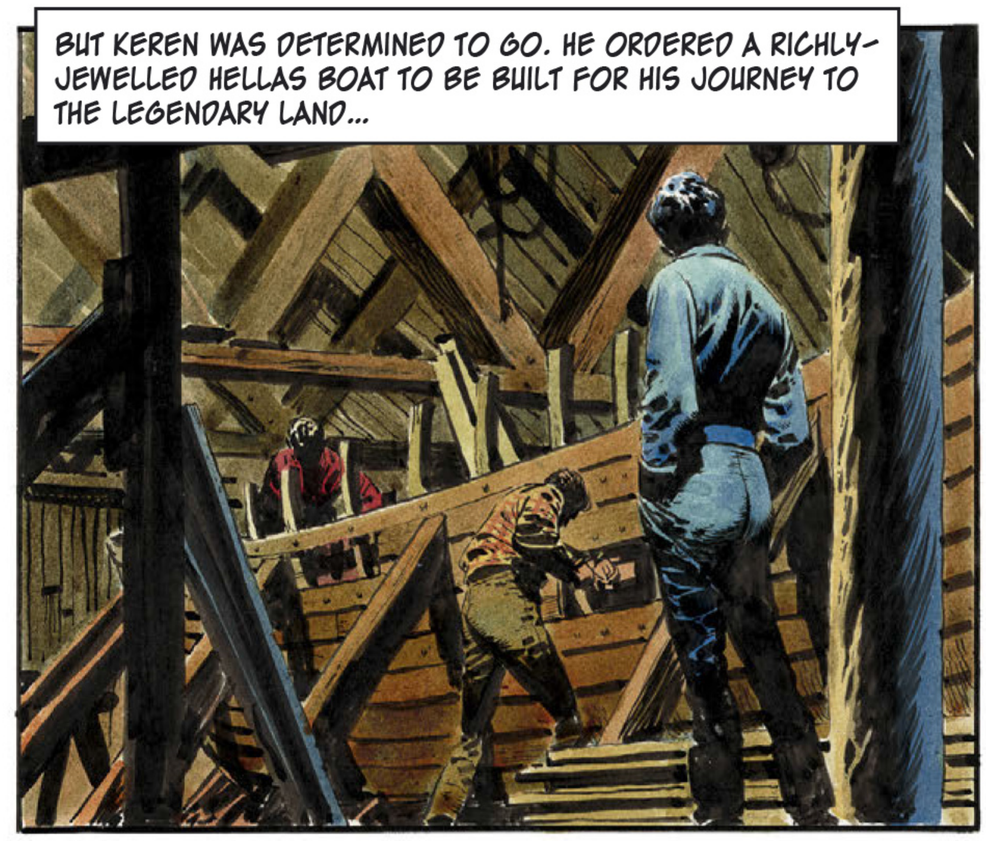

HELLAS BELONGS TO THE ZEROS-AND WE ARE THEIR SLAVES. FOR A THOUSAND YEARS, THE PEOPLE OF ELEKTON HAVE LABOURED TO KEEP THESE BRUTES IN EASE AND COMFORT!
PERIC, WE'VE GOT TO ESCAPE. WE'VE GOT TO RETURN AND DESTROY THE LEGEND OF HELLAS!

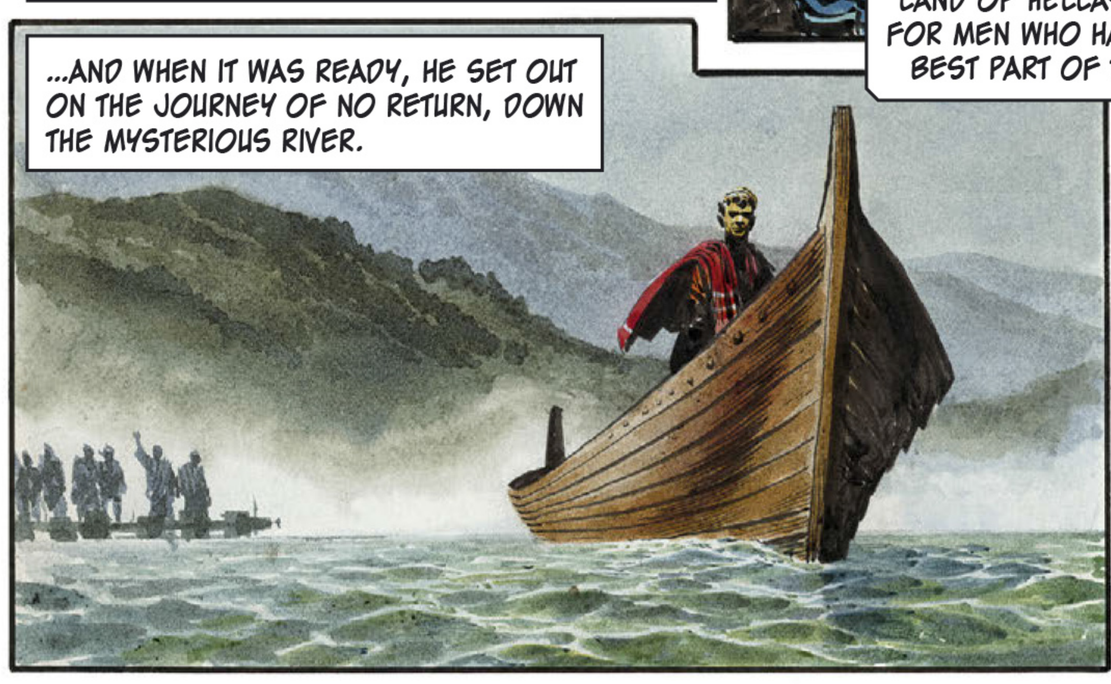

THIS HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR A THOUSAND YEARS AND EVERYONE WHO HAS COME HERE HAS HAD THE SAME IDEA... BUT THERE IS NO ESCAPE, JANNO... YOU HAVE MADE THE JOURNEY OF NO RETURN!

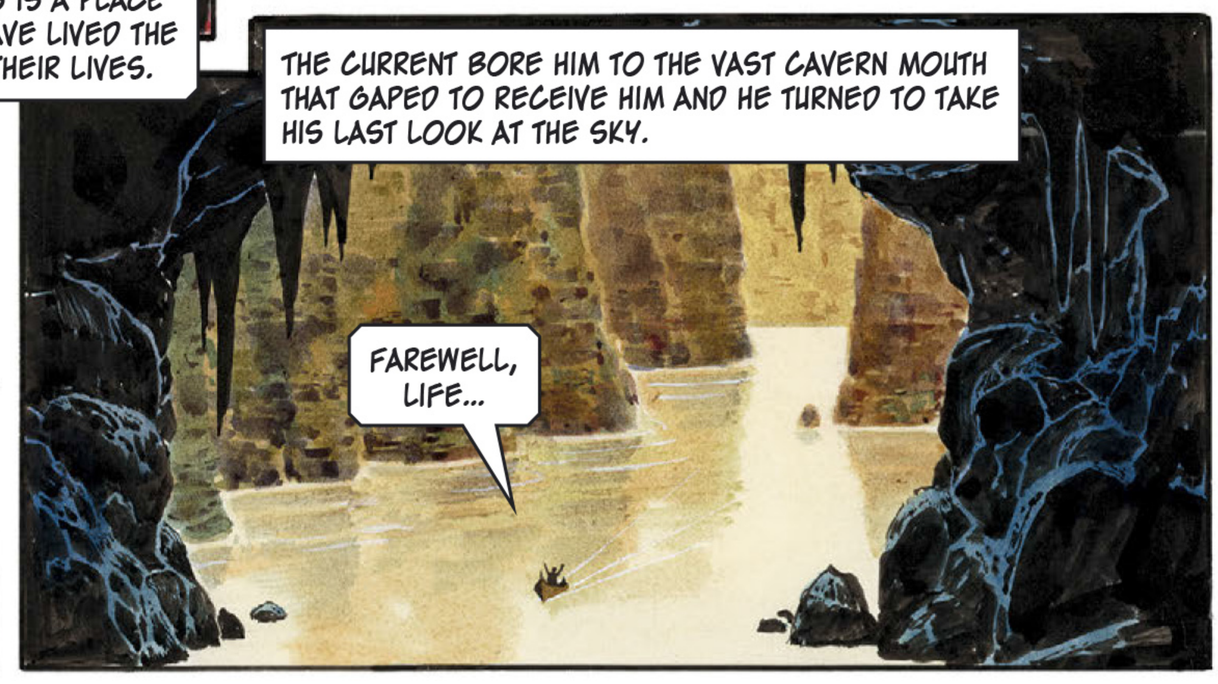
MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE CITY OF TRIGAN, KEREN CAME TO A DECISION. HE PRESENTED HIMSELF BEFORE THE CAPTAIN OF THE AIR FLEET...
YOU SAY YOU CAN NO LONGER FLY... WHY IS THIS?
I KILLED MY BEST FRIEND IN THE AIR, CAPTAIN. I SHALL NEVER BE ABLE TO TAKE THE CONTROLS OF AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT AGAIN-NEVER!-AND I ASK MY NAME TO BE TAKEN OFF THE ROLL OF PILOTS.


IT'S THE ONLY WAY...
IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, THE MEMORY OF THE TRAGEDY PREYED ON THE BOY'S MIND. IMAGINING HIMSELF SPURNED BY ALL, HE WOULD SIT ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER PYX... GAZING INTO THE FAST-FLOWING WATERS.

FINALLY, HE WENT TO TRIGO.
LORD TRIGO, IT IS MY WISH TO TAKE THE JOURNEY OF NO RETURN AND JOIN JANNO IF HE STILL LIVES!
YOU ARE YOUNG, KEREN... THE LAND OF HELLAS IS A PLACE FOR MEN WHO HAVE LIVED THE BEST PART OF THEIR LIVES.


BUT KEREN WAS DETERMINED TO GO. HE ORDERED A RICHLY-JEWELLED HELLAS BOAT TO BE BUILT FOR HIS JOURNEY TO THE LEGENDARY LAND...


...AND WHEN IT WAS READY, HE SET OUT ON THE JOURNEY OF NO RETURN, DOWN THE MYSTERIOUS RIVER.


THE CURRENT BORE HIM TO THE VAST CAVERN MOUTH THAT GAPED TO RECEIVE HIM AND HE TURNED TO TAKE HIS LAST LOOK AT THE SKY.
FAREWELL, LIFE...

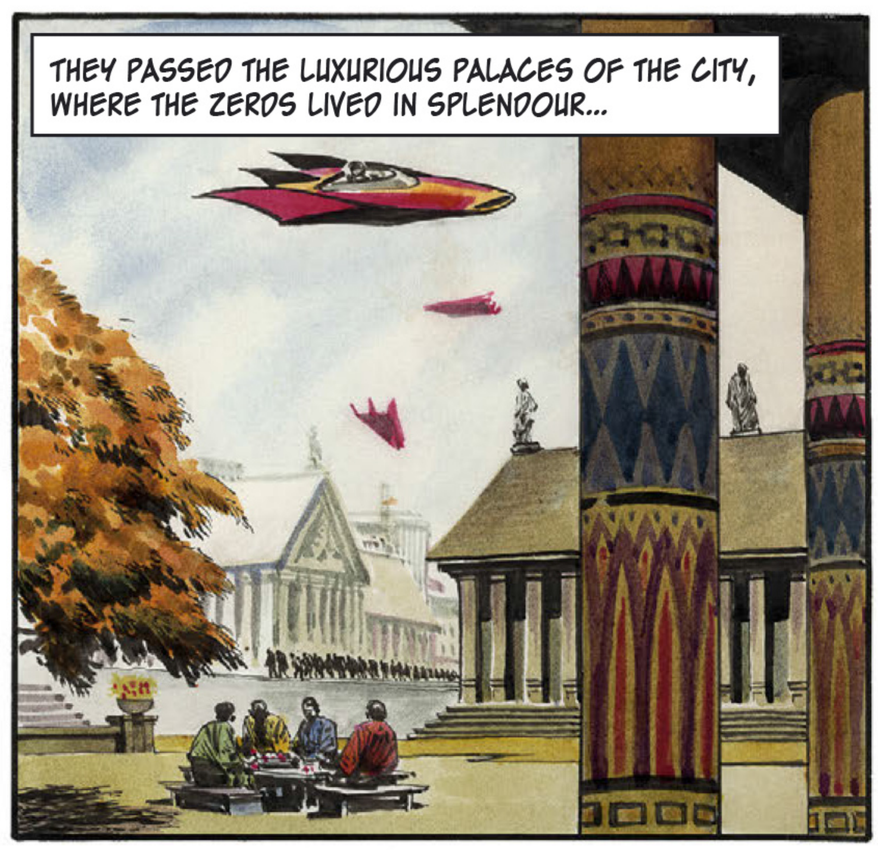
AFTER MANY HOURS OF BACK-BREAKING LABOUR, JANNO AND PERIC SAW TWO OF THE GUARDS DRAGGING A LIMP FIGURE TOWARDS THEM.
HERE COMES ANOTHER UNFORTUNATE TO JOIN US!

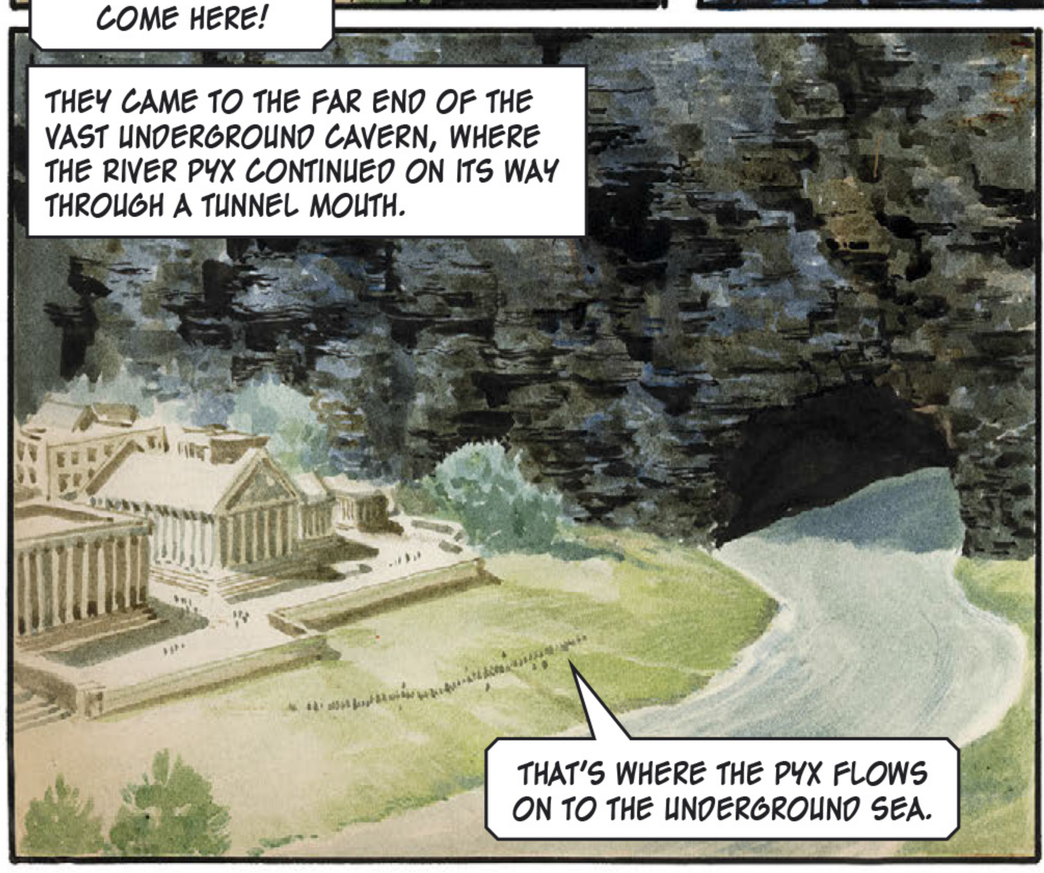
THE ZEROS THREW THE NEWCOMER TO THE ROCKY GROUND.
HA! THIS ONE SHOWED THE USUAL FIGHT WHEN HE FOUND THAT HELLAS WAS NOT ALL HE'D HOPED FOR.
HE'LL SOON RECOVER. HE'S A STRONG ONE... YEARS OF WORK IN HIM!

WHEN THE GUARDS WERE OUT OF SIGHT, JANNO AND PERIC KNELT BESIDE THE PROSTRATE FIGURE AND TURNED HIM OVER...
KEREN!
BY THE STARS!
JANNO... CAN THIS BE HELLAS?

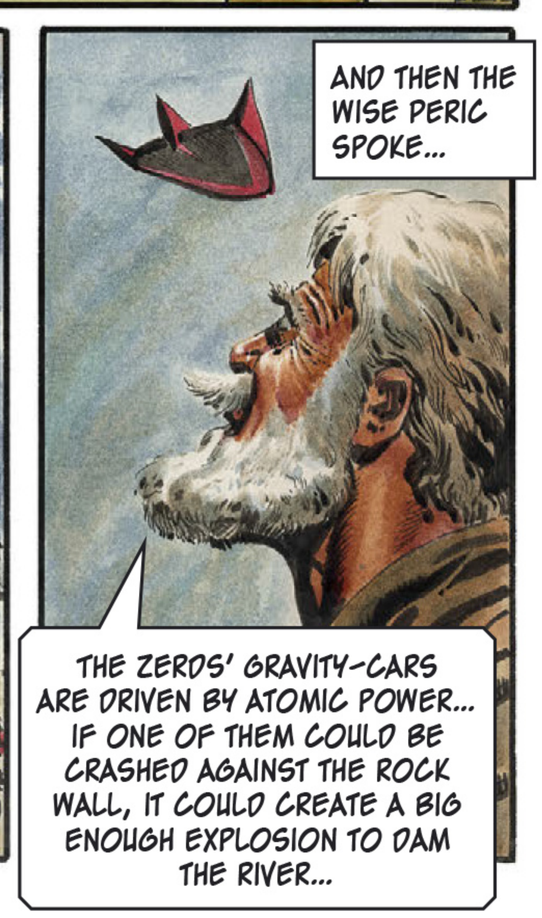
LATER, WHEN KEREN HAD RECOVERED, THEY TOLD HIM THE TRUTH ABOUT THE LEGENDARY LAND...
THEN WE MUST ESCAPE!
AAAH! THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY WHEN THEY FIRST COME HERE!
PERIC BELIEVES ESCAPE IS IMPOSSIBLE... BUT NOTHING'S IMPOSSIBLE!

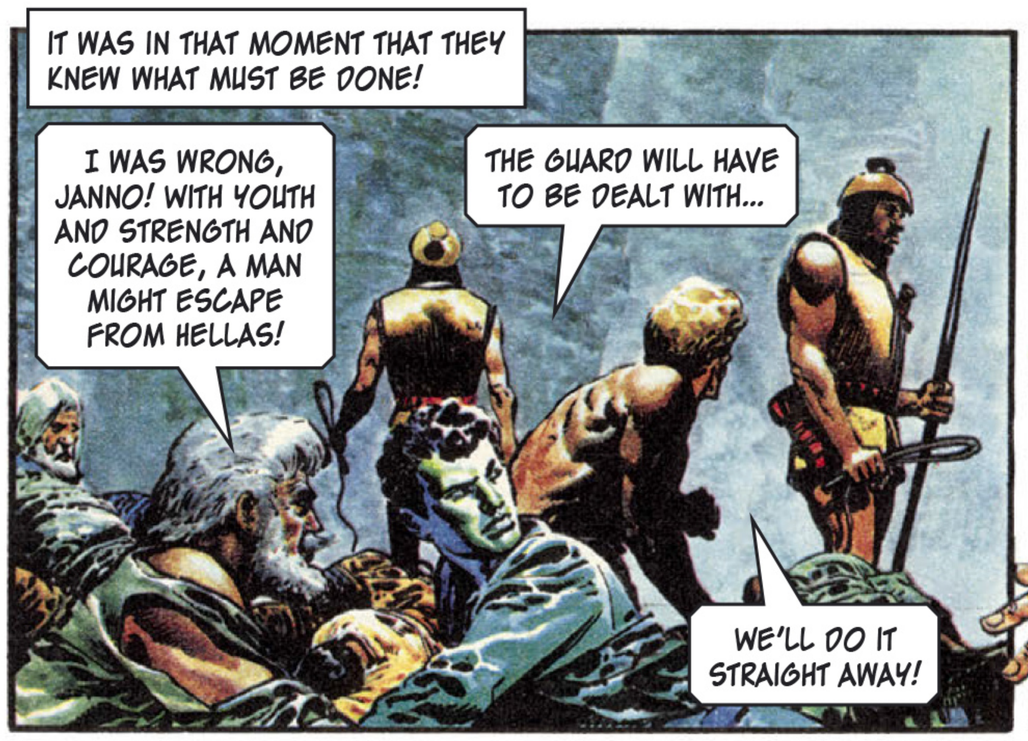
THERE WAS NO NIGHT OR DAY IN HELLAS. ONLY WHEN THEY WERE DROPPING FROM FATIGUE WERE THEY LED OFF FOR A FEW HOURS' SLEEP...
THERE GO ANOTHER PARTY OF SLAVES TO TAKE OUR PLACE. WORK NEVER CEASES IN HELLAS!

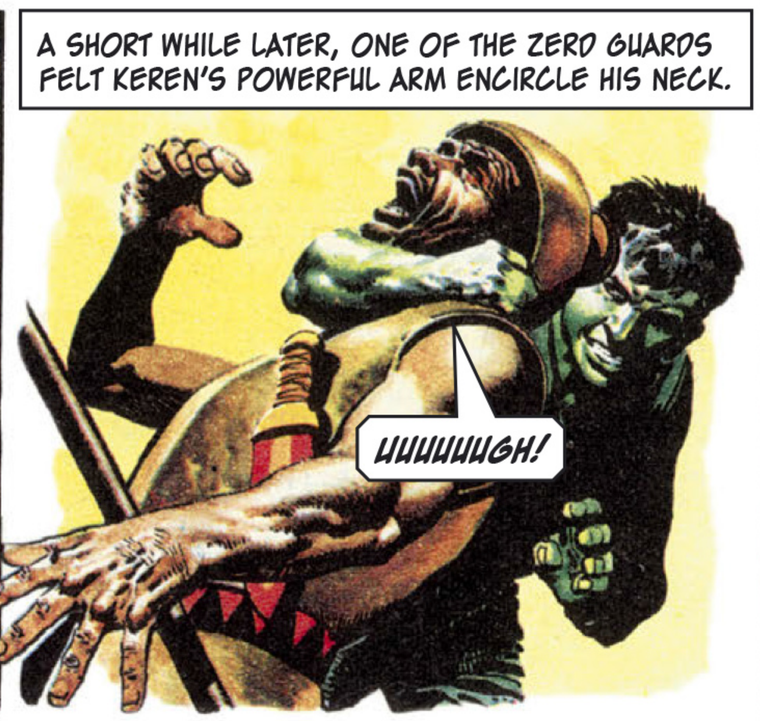

THEY PASSED THE LUXURIOUS PALACES OF THE CITY, WHERE THE ZEROS LIVED IN SPLENDOUR...


THEY CAME TO THE FAR END OF THE VAST UNDERGROUND CAVERN, WHERE THE RIVER PYX CONTINUED ON ITS WAY THROUGH A TUNNEL MOUTH.
THAT'S WHERE THE PYX FLOWS ON TO THE UNDERGROUND SEA.

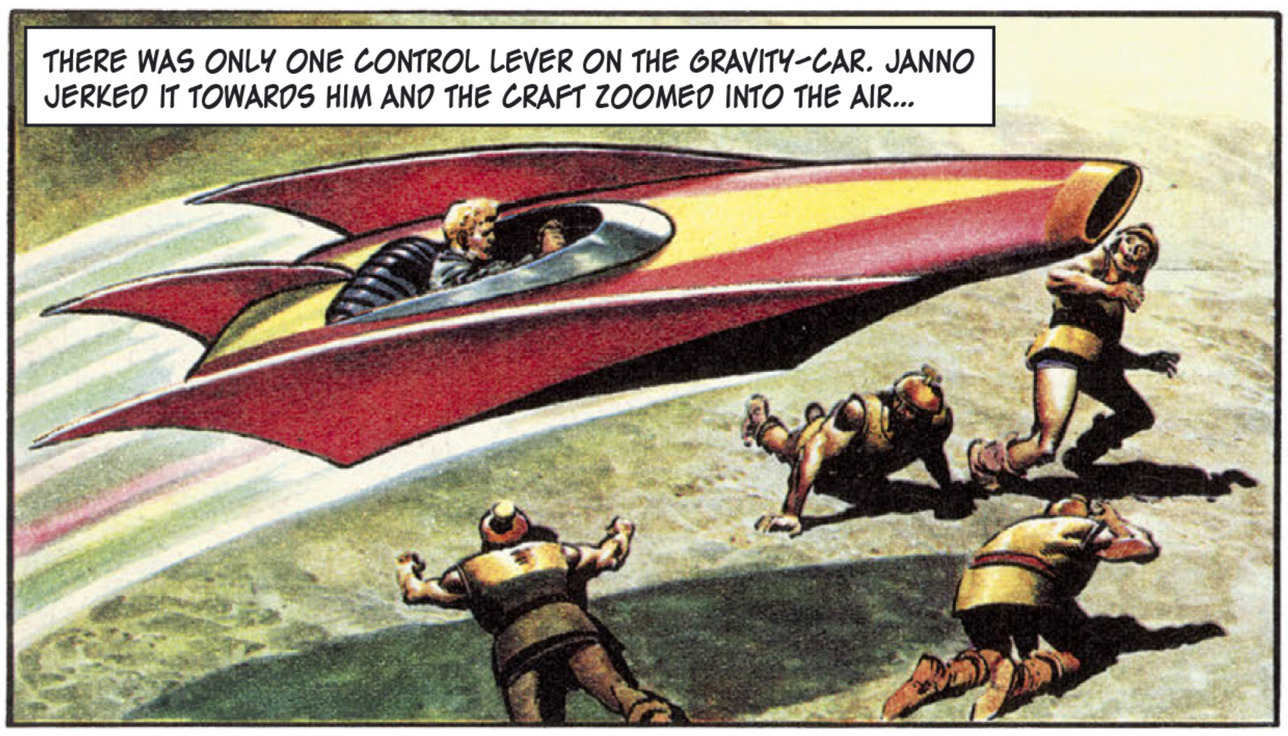
THE SLAVES FELL DOWN AND SLEPT WITH SHEER EXHAUSTION... BUT JANNO STARED AT THE TUNNEL MOUTH WITH THOUGHTS OF ESCAPE TEEMING IN HIS MIND.
IF SOME WAY COULD BE FOUND TO BLOCK THE TUNNEL MOUTH, THE RIVER WOULD FLOOD... AND FILL THE CAVERN!
YES... BUT HOW TO DO IT?

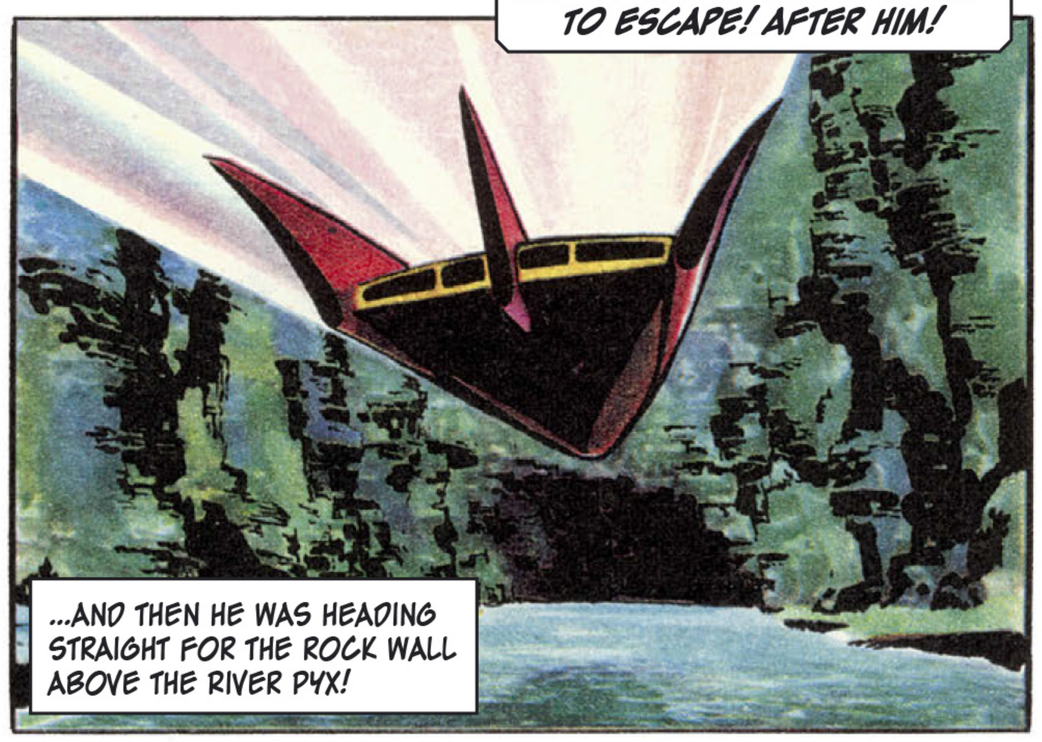

AND THEN THE WISE PERIC SPOKE...
THE ZEROS' GRAVITY-CARS ARE DRIVEN BY ATOMIC POWER... IF ONE OF THEM COULD BE CRASHED AGAINST THE ROCK WALL, IT COULD CREATE A BIG ENOUGH EXPLOSION TO DAM THE RIVER...

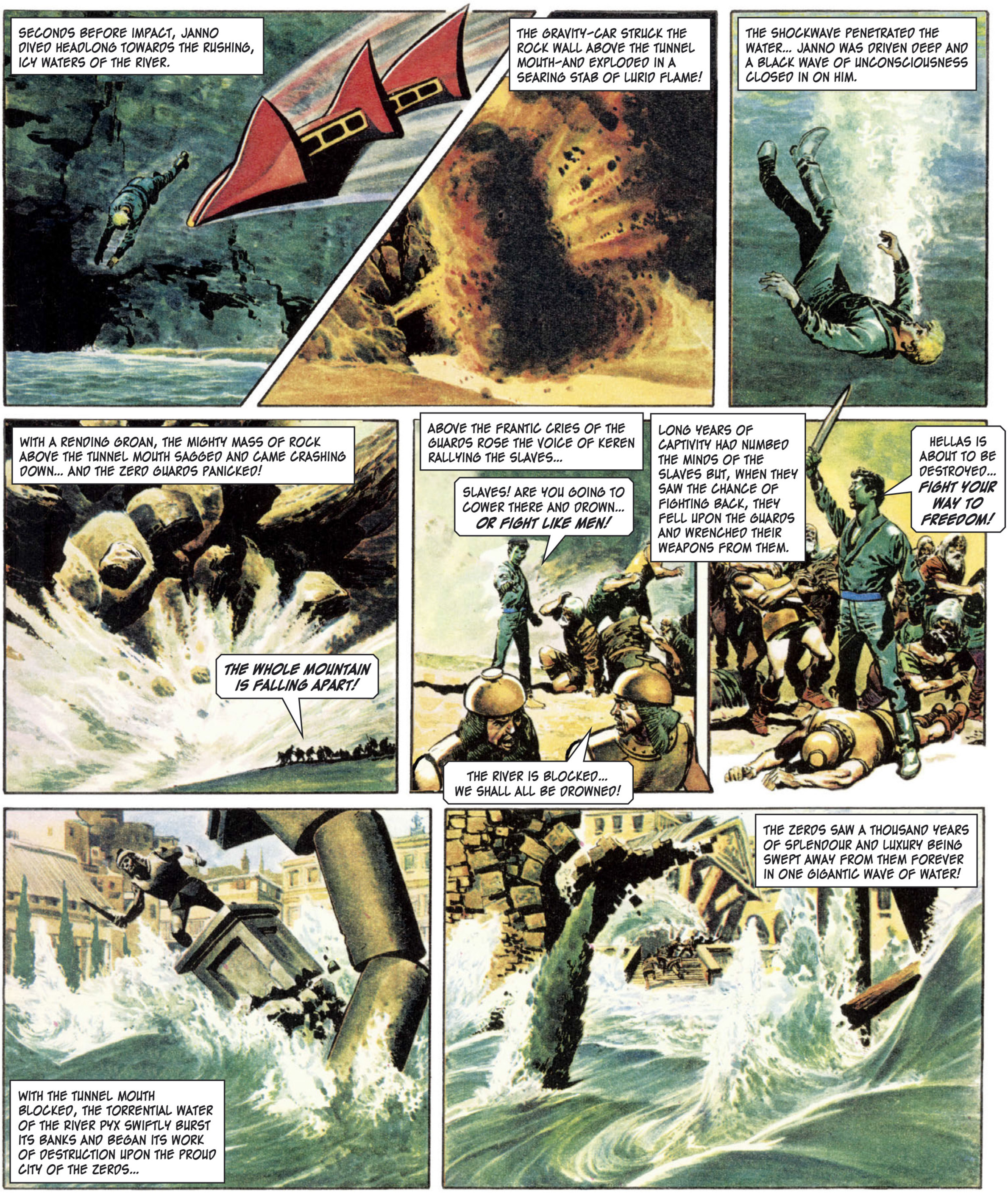

IT WAS IN THAT MOMENT THAT THEY KNEW WHAT MUST BE DONE!
I WAS WRONG, JANNO! WITH YOUTH AND STRENGTH AND COURAGE, A MAN MIGHT ESCAPE FROM HELLAS!
THE GUARD WILL HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH...
WE'LL DO IT STRAIGHT AWAY!


A SHORT WHILE LATER, ONE OF THE ZERO GUARDS FELT KEREN'S POWERFUL ARM ENCIRCLE HIS NECK.
UUUUUUGH!

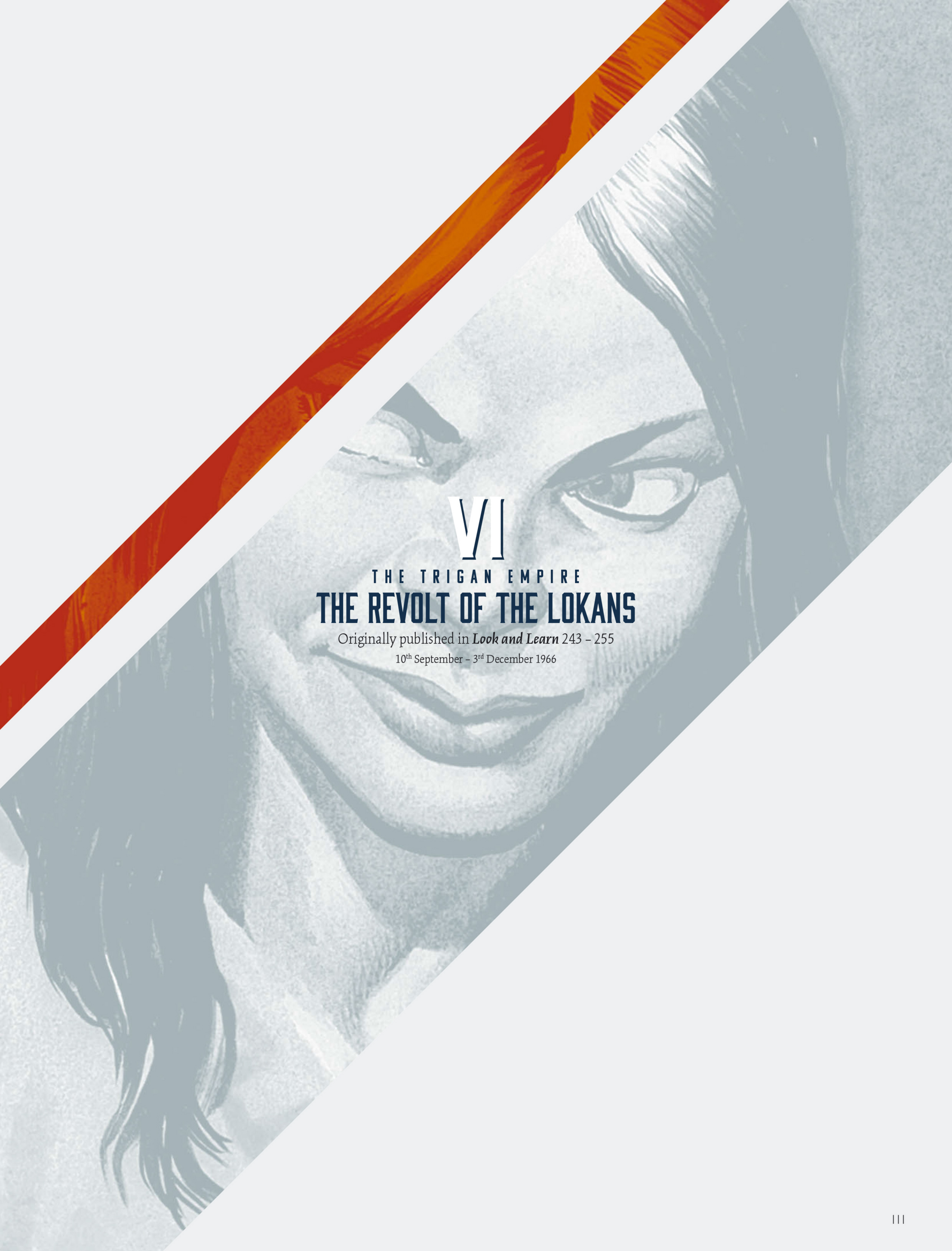
AND THEN JANNO WAS RUNNING TOWARDS ONE OF THE GRAVITY-CARS THAT LAY NEARBY... WITH FURIOUS SHOUTS RINGING IN HIS EARS!
ONE OF THE SLAVES IS TRYING TO ESCAPE! AFTER HIM!


THERE WAS ONLY ONE CONTROL LEVER ON THE GRAVITY-CAR. JANNO JERKED IT TOWARDS HIM AND THE CRAFT ZOOMED INTO THE AIR...


...AND THEN HE WAS HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE ROCK WALL ABOVE THE RIVER PYX!


SECONDS BEFORE IMPACT, JANNO DIVED HEADLONG TOWARDS THE RUSHING, ICY WATERS OF THE RIVER.
THE GRAVITY-CAR STRUCK THE ROCK WALL ABOVE THE TUNNEL MOUTH-AND EXPLODED IN A SEARING STAB OF LURID FLAME!
THE SHOCKWAVE PENETRATED THE WATER... JANNO WAS DRIVEN DEEP AND A BLACK WAVE OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS CLOSED IN ON HIM.
WITH A RENDING GROAN, THE MIGHTY MASS OF ROCK ABOVE THE TUNNEL MOUTH SAGGED AND CAME CRASHING DOWN... AND THE ZERO GUARDS PANICKED!
THE WHOLE MOUNTAIN IS FALLING APART!
ABOVE THE FRANTIC CRIES OF THE GUARDS ROSE THE VOICE OF KEREN RALLYING THE SLAVES...
SLAVES! ARE YOU GOING TO COWER THERE AND DROWN... OR FIGHT LIKE MEN!
THE RIVER IS BLOCKED... WE SHALL ALL BE DROWNED!
LONG YEARS OF CAPTIVITY HAD NUMBED THE MINDS OF THE SLAVES BUT, WHEN THEY SAW THE CHANCE OF FIGHTING BACK, THEY FELL UPON THE GUARDS AND WRENCHED THEIR WEAPONS FROM THEM.
HELLAS IS ABOUT TO BE DESTROYED... FIGHT YOUR WAY TO FREEDOM!
WITH THE TUNNEL MOUTH BLOCKED, THE TORRENTIAL WATER OF THE RIVER PYX SWIFTLY BURST ITS BANKS AND BEGAN ITS WORK OF DESTRUCTION UPON THE PROUD CITY OF THE ZEROS...
THE ZEROS SAW A THOUSAND YEARS OF SPLENDOUR AND LUXURY BEING SWEPT AWAY FROM THEM FOREVER IN ONE GIGANTIC WAVE OF WATER!

LEADING THE SLAVES, KEREN AND OLD PERIC FOUGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH THE CITY TILL THEY REACHED A FLIGHT OF STONE STEPS THAT LED UP TO THE VAST VAULT HIGH ABOVE...
THIS LEADS TO THE VERY HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN UNDER WHICH WE STAND... AND IT IS THERE WE MUST JOURNEY!
THEY TOILED UP THE TOWERING STAIRWAY... AND KEREN LOOKED BACK WITH AGONY TO SEE THE WATERS RISING BELOW THEM.
JANNO... JANNO...
I FEEL IN MY HEART THAT WE SHALL NEVER SEE THE GALLANT LAD AGAIN, KEREN!
THE TOP OF THE VAST STAIRWAY LED INTO THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN AND, FAR ABOVE THEM, THEY COULD SEE A CIRCLE OF DAYLIGHT...
SLAVES... THERE IS THE WORLD OUTSIDE... AND FREEDOM!
FREEDOM!
DISREGARDING THEIR WEARINESS, THEY CLIMBED THE REST OF THE WAY IN FRANTIC HASTE... AND CAME OUT INTO THE SUNLIGHT OF ELEKTON.
FREE... FREE!
AFTER TWENTY LONG YEARS!
AND THEN KEREN HEARD IT... A VOICE CALLING HIS NAME! LOOKING DOWN INTO THE DARK ABYSS, HE SAW A FAMILIAR FIGURE CLIMBING TOWARDS HIM!
KEREN!
JANNO! THANK THE STARS... YOU'RE SAFE!
AND SO, BY THEIR VALOUR AND COURAGE, THEY HAD DESTROYED FOREVER THE EVIL, FALSE LEGEND OF HELLAS.
WE HAVE COME BACK FROM THE LAND OF NO RETURN!
WHERE NO ONE WILL EVER JOURNEY TO... EVER AGAIN!



VI

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE REVOLT OF THE LOKANS

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 243 – 255

10th September – 3rd December 1966

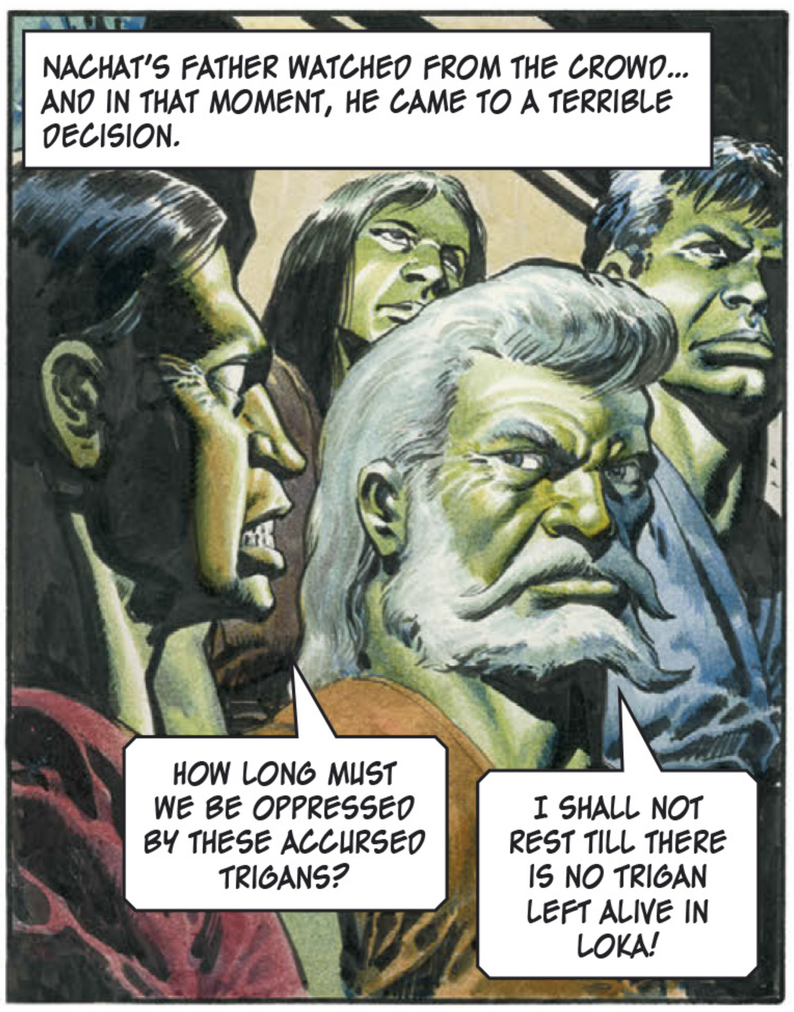
EVERY DAY, TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT PATROLLED THE SKIES ABOVE LOKA FOR SIGNS OF TROUBLE FROM THE CONQUERED PEOPLE...
ONE FATEFUL DAY, THE KEEN EYES OF A TRIGAN PILOT SPOTTED A MOVEMENT ON THE SANDY PLAIN BELOW...
THERE'S A MAN RIDING A KREED DOWN THERE... LOOKS LIKE A LOKAN... I'M GOING DOWN TO INVESTIGATE!
THE RIDER WAS A SAVAGE-FACED YOUNG LOKAN WHO TURNED WITH A SCOWL OF FURY WHEN HE HEARD THE CRAFT'S ENGINES... AND DREW A PISTOL...
BY THE STARS, THEY WON'T TAKE ME ALIVE!
HE FIRED...
SO PERISH ALL TRIGANS!
THE DISINTEGRATOR FOUND ITS MARK... AND THE STRICKEN CRAFT SPUN, FLAMING TO DESTRUCTION.
BUT THE PILOT OF THE OTHER CRAFT WAS SWIFT TO AVENGE HIS COMRADE. SWOOPING IN LOW, HE FIRED...
LANDING, THE TRIGAN PILOT WENT OVER TO THE FALLEN LOKAN. HE FOUND HIM STILL ALIVE, BUT UNCONSCIOUS...
HE WILL LIVE TO FACE TRIGAN JUSTICE!

THE PRISONER MADE A SWIFT RECOVERY FROM HIS WOUND. LATER HE WAS LED IN CHAINS THROUGH THE CITY OF LOKA.
THEY HAVE CAPTURED NACHAT... AND NOW THEY ARE GOING TO TRY HIM!

THE LOKANS WATCHED IN SULLEN FURY...
NACHAT HAS DONE WELL. HE HAS CARRIED OUT A ONE-MAN WAR AGAINST THE TRIGANS FOR NEARLY A YEAR. YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF HIM, KALEK!
I AM INDEED PROUD OF MY SON!

NACHAT THE REBEL WAS TAKEN BEFORE THE TRIGAN GOVERNOR OF LOKA.
YOU HAVE DEFIED THE LAWS OF TRIGAN WHICH SAY THAT NO CITIZEN OF LOKA MAY BEAR ARMS. YOU HAVE TREACHEROUSLY SLAIN MANY OF MY MEN...
I WISH I HAD SLAIN THOUSANDS MORE... INCLUDING YOURSELF!

TAKE HIM AWAY! SET HIM TO WORK IN THE MINES... FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE!


NACHAT'S FATHER WATCHED FROM THE CROWD... AND IN THAT MOMENT, HE CAME TO A TERRIBLE DECISION.
HOW LONG MUST WE BE OPPRESSED BY THESE ACCURSED TRIGANS?
I SHALL NOT REST TILL THERE IS NO TRIGAN LEFT ALIVE IN LOKA!

THAT SAME DAY, KALEK JOURNEYED FAR INTO THE WILDERNESS OF LOKA.
THERE IS SOMEONE WISER THAN I – WISER THAN ANYONE AMONGST OUR PEOPLE – WHO WILL SHOW ME THE WAY!

HE CAME AT LENGTH TO A CAVE CUT INTO A MOUNTAINSIDE. A GREAT DRUM HUNG THERE... AND HE STRUCK THE DRUM A MIGHTY BLOW SO THAT THE SOUND ECHOED AND RE-ECHOED AGAINST THE ROCKY WALLS...

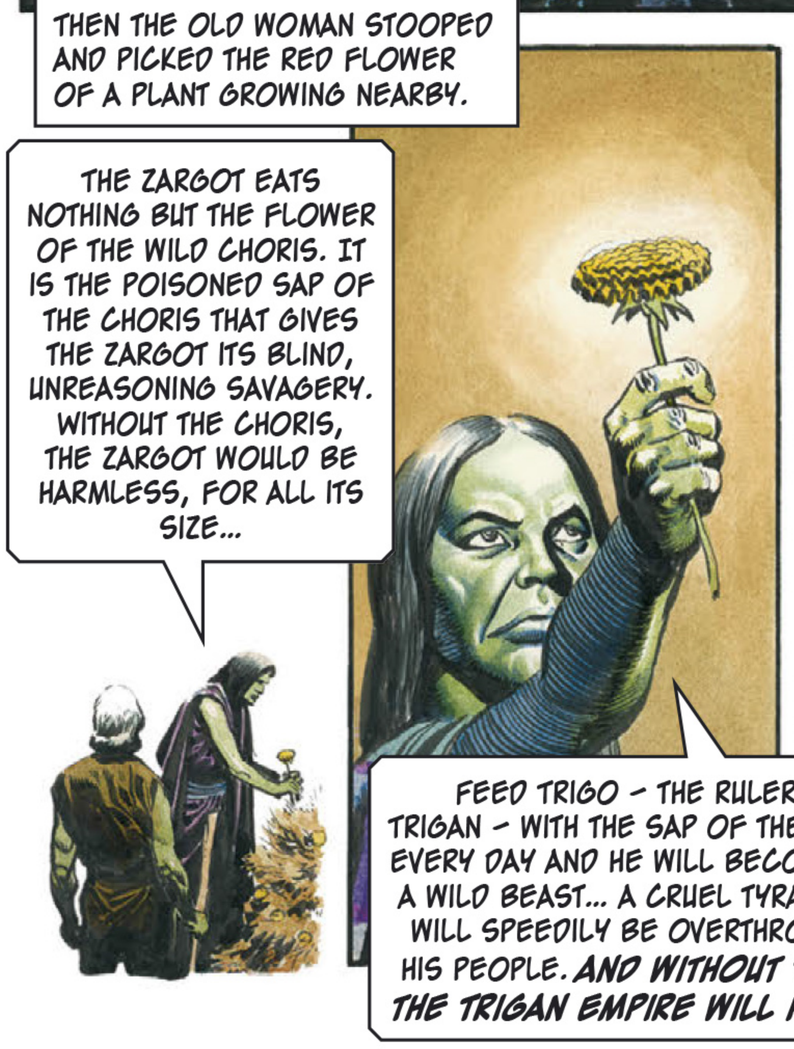
IN ANSWER TO THE POUNDING OF THE MASSIVE DRUM, A STRANGE FIGURE EMERGED FROM THE CAVE MOUTH...
WHO DISTURBS THE PEACE OF THE WISE WOMAN OF LOKA?

KALEK FELL ON HIS KNEES BEFORE THE HALF-LEGENDARY WISE WOMAN OF HIS PEOPLE.
O WISE ONE... TELL ME HOW OUR PEOPLE CAN BE RID OF THE TRIGANS WHO OPPRESS US...

THE TRIGANS ARE POWERFUL BUT THEIR VERY STRENGTH CAN BE THEIR DESTRUCTION. YOU MUST MAKE THEM DESTROY THEMSELVES!

KALEK WAS PUZZLED BY HER ANSWER... AND THEN SHE LED HIM TO A SPUR OF ROCK AND POINTED ACROSS THE PLAIN.
WHAT DO YOU SEE?
A HERD OF ZARGOTS, FIGHTING AMONGST THEMSELVES...

ZARGOTS! THE MOST SAVAGE WILD BEASTS ON ALL ELEKTON... SO FEROCIOUS THAT THEY FOUGHT EVEN WITH THEIR OWN KIND.


THEN THE OLD WOMAN STOOPED AND PICKED THE RED FLOWER OF A PLANT GROWING NEARBY.
THE ZARGOT EATS NOTHING BUT THE FLOWER OF THE WILD CHORIS. IT IS THE POISONED SAP OF THE CHORIS THAT GIVES THE ZARGOT ITS BLIND, UNREASONING SAVAGERY. WITHOUT THE CHORIS, THE ZARGOT WOULD BE HARMLESS, FOR ALL ITS SIZE...
FEED TRIGO – THE RULER OF TRIGAN – WITH THE SAP OF THE CHORIS EVERY DAY AND HE WILL BECOME LIKE A WILD BEAST... A CRUEL TYRANT WHO WILL SPEEDILY BE OVERTHROWN BY HIS PEOPLE. AND WITHOUT TRIGO, THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WILL PERISH!

KALEK SAW THE WISDOM OF THE CUNNING PLAN. BUT...
BUT HOW CAN TRIGO BE MADE TO EAT THE CHORIS EVERY DAY?
IT CAN BE ARRANGED...

THE WISE WOMAN CALLED OUT... AND A GIRL EMERGED FROM THE CAVE MOUTH...
MY GRANDDAUGHTER, AMALA, WILL JOURNEY TO TRIGAN AND DO WHAT HAS TO BE DONE!

SOME WEEKS LATER, THE SOUND OF BLADE ON BLADE ECHOED THROUGH THE PALACE AT TRIGAN. TRIGO AND HIS YOUNG NEPHEW JANNO WERE PRACTISING THEIR SWORD-PLAY...
WELL DONE, LAD... WE'LL MAKE A MASTER SWORDSMAN OF YOU YET.
YOU'RE FOREVER EATING, YOU GREEDY YOUNG RASCAL! WHAT IS IT NOW?
A SWEETMEAT, UNCLE. THERE'S A YOUNG LOKAN WOMAN WHO SELLS THE SWEETMEATS FROM A STALL IN THE MARKET PLACE. LIKE ONE? THEY'RE VERY GOOD.
GOOD-HUMOUREDLY, THE RULER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE ACCEPTED THE SWEETMEAT... AND IN DOING SO HE CONDEMNED HIS EMPIRE TO DISASTER!
MMMM... VERY GOOD. I MUST ASK SALVIA TO GET ME SOME...
BY THE WAY, I'M THINKING OF ORDERING A NEW SWORD, ONE OF TOUGHER TEMPER...
NEXT DAY, SALVIA, WHO ACTED AS HOUSEKEEPER IN THE PALACE, WENT SHOPPING IN THE MARKET PLACE. SHE WENT TO THE SWEETMEAT STALL.
YOUR SWEETMEATS HAVE FOUND FAVOUR WITH LORD TRIGO.
I AM HONOURED.
AMALA TURNED HER FACE AWAY TO HIDE HER SMILE OF SAVAGE TRIUMPH.
I WILL MAKE A SPECIAL SUPPLY FOR LORD TRIGO ...EVERY DAY!

SOME DAYS LATER, JANNO CALLED TO SEE HIS UNCLE TRIGO. THE RULER OF TRIGAN TOSSED A SWORD TO HIS NEPHEW...
JUST IN TIME FOR SWORD-PRACTICE! CATCH!

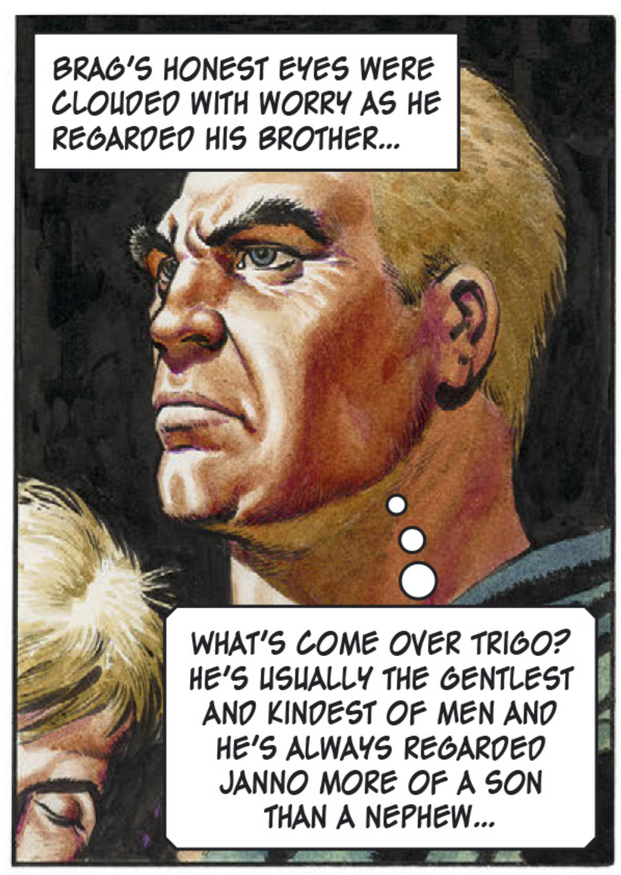
NEXT INSTANT, TRIGO HURLED HIMSELF AT JANNO WITH DOWN SWINGING BLADE.
I'LL SOON PUT AN END TO YOU!
UNCLE...?!

CONFUSED BY THE UNACCUSTOMED FURY OF HIS UNCLE'S ATTACK, JANNO MADE A MISTAKE... AND HIS WEAPON WAS KNOCKED FROM HIS GRASP!
GOT YOU! AND NOW...

JANNO STUMBLED AS HE BACKED AWAY IN ALARM – AND HIS ACTION SAVED HIS LIFE... TRIGO'S SWORD STRUCK HIM A GLANCING BLOW!
AAAAGH!

TRIGO'S SWORD WAS RAISED ON HIGH ABOVE THE STRICKEN LAD... BUT HIS WRIST WAS CAUGHT IN A GRIP OF STEEL...
TRIGO! HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES?

YOU'VE WOUNDED HIM... AND IF I HADN'T STOPPED YOU, YOU WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM!
SO? HE'S A TRIGAN WARRIOR, ISN'T HE? A WARRIOR'S FATE IS TO DIE IN COMBAT.


BRAG'S HONEST EYES WERE CLOUDED WITH WORRY AS HE REGARDED HIS BROTHER...
WHAT'S COME OVER TRIGO? HE'S USUALLY THE GENTLEST AND KINDEST OF MEN AND HE'S ALWAYS REGARDED JANNO MORE OF A SON THAN A NEPHEW...

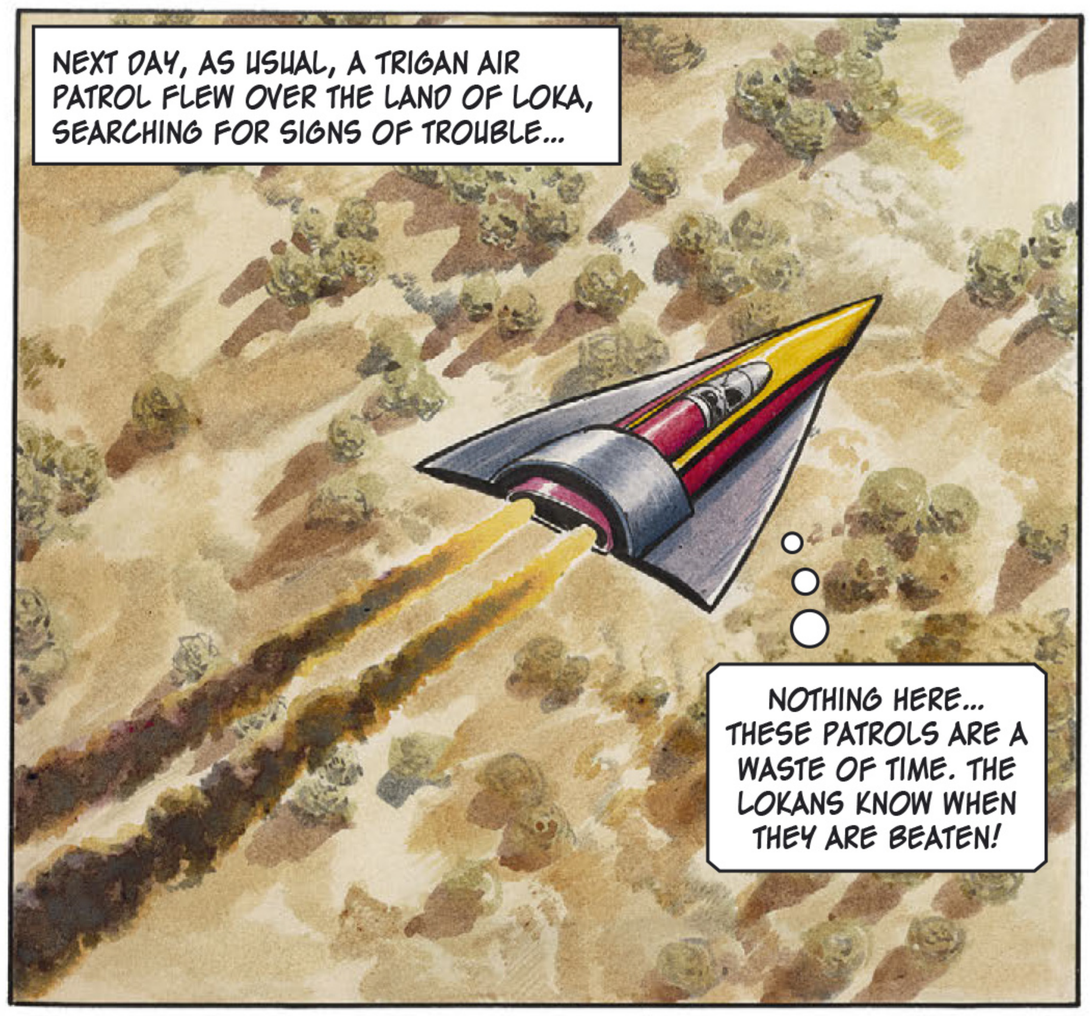
THAT NIGHT THERE WAS A FEAST IN THE GREAT HALL OF THE PALACE. TRIGO SAT AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE, BROODING BLACKLY. HE ATE LITTLE... BUT NIBBLED AT THE DISH OF SWEETMEATS AT HIS ELBOW...
...THE SWEETMEATS THAT WERE STEEPED IN THE POISONED JUICE OF THE CHORIS FLOWER!

THEN – IT HAPPENED! TRIGO'S ZOLT SLAVE, URA, CLUMSILY UPSET A GOBLET...
STUPID CREATURE!

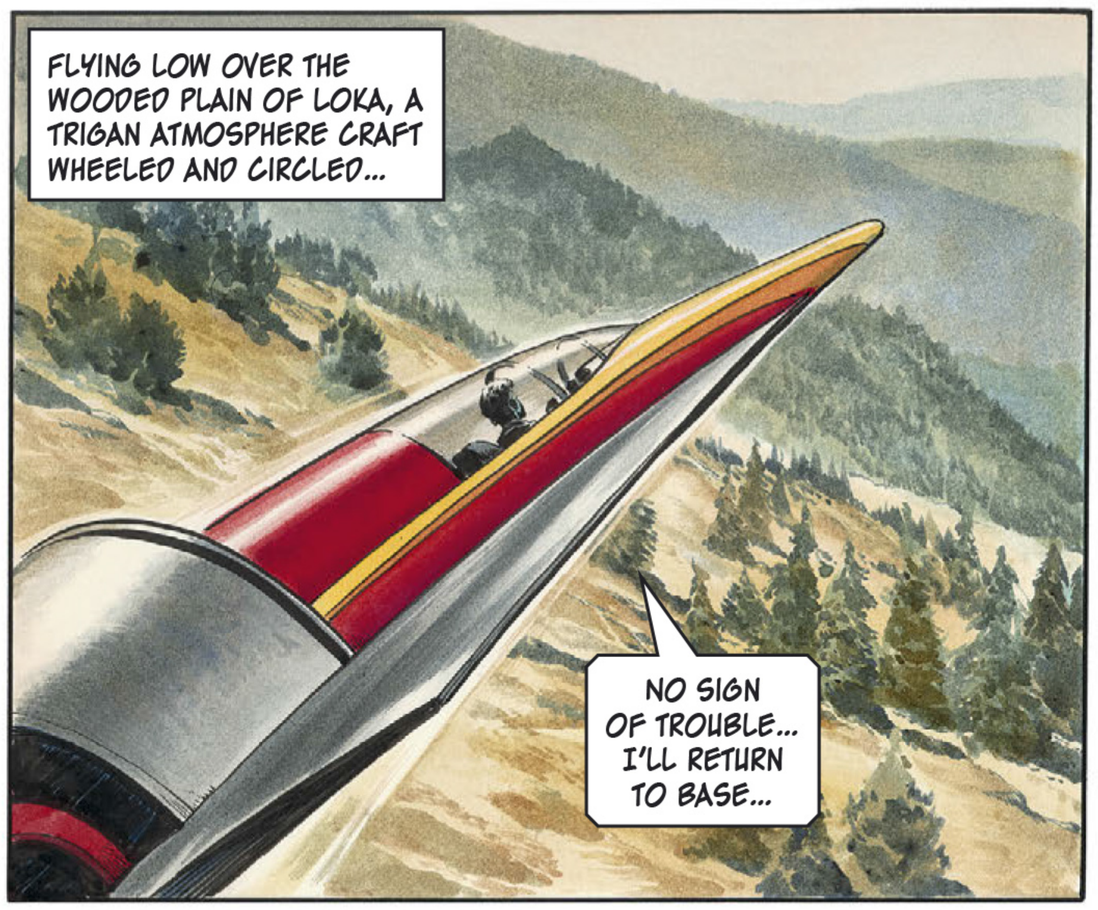
LEAPING TO HIS FEET, TRIGO FELLED THE ZOLT WITH ONE BLOW!
YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE... AND, BY THE STARS, YOU WILL PAY DEARLY!

HIS VOICE ROSE TO A WILD PITCH OF FURY AS HE CALLED TO THE GUARDS.
TAKE HIM AWAY. HE'LL DIE FOR THAT... WHEN I HAVE DEVISED A SUITABLE END FOR HIM!

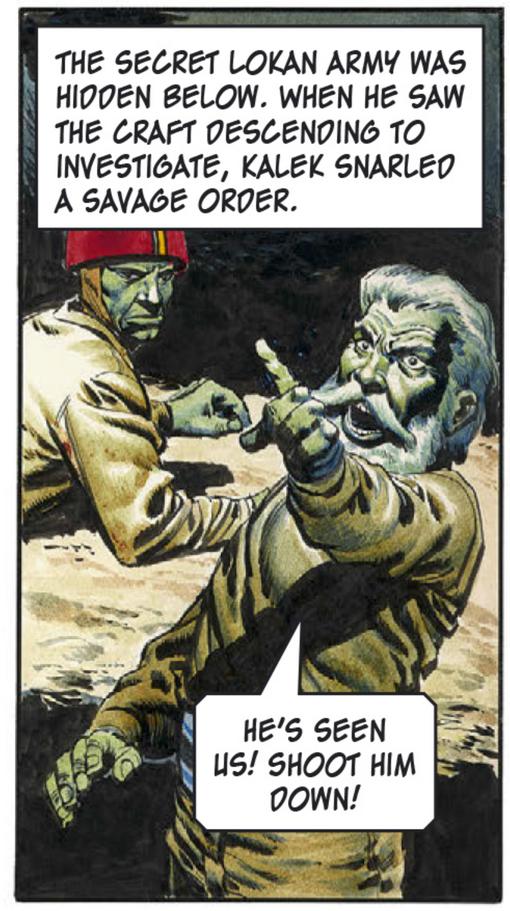
AND BRAG THOUGHT...
URA THE ZOLT IS DEVOTED TO TRIGO AND TRIGO KNOWS IT! I DON'T LIKE THIS... I DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL...

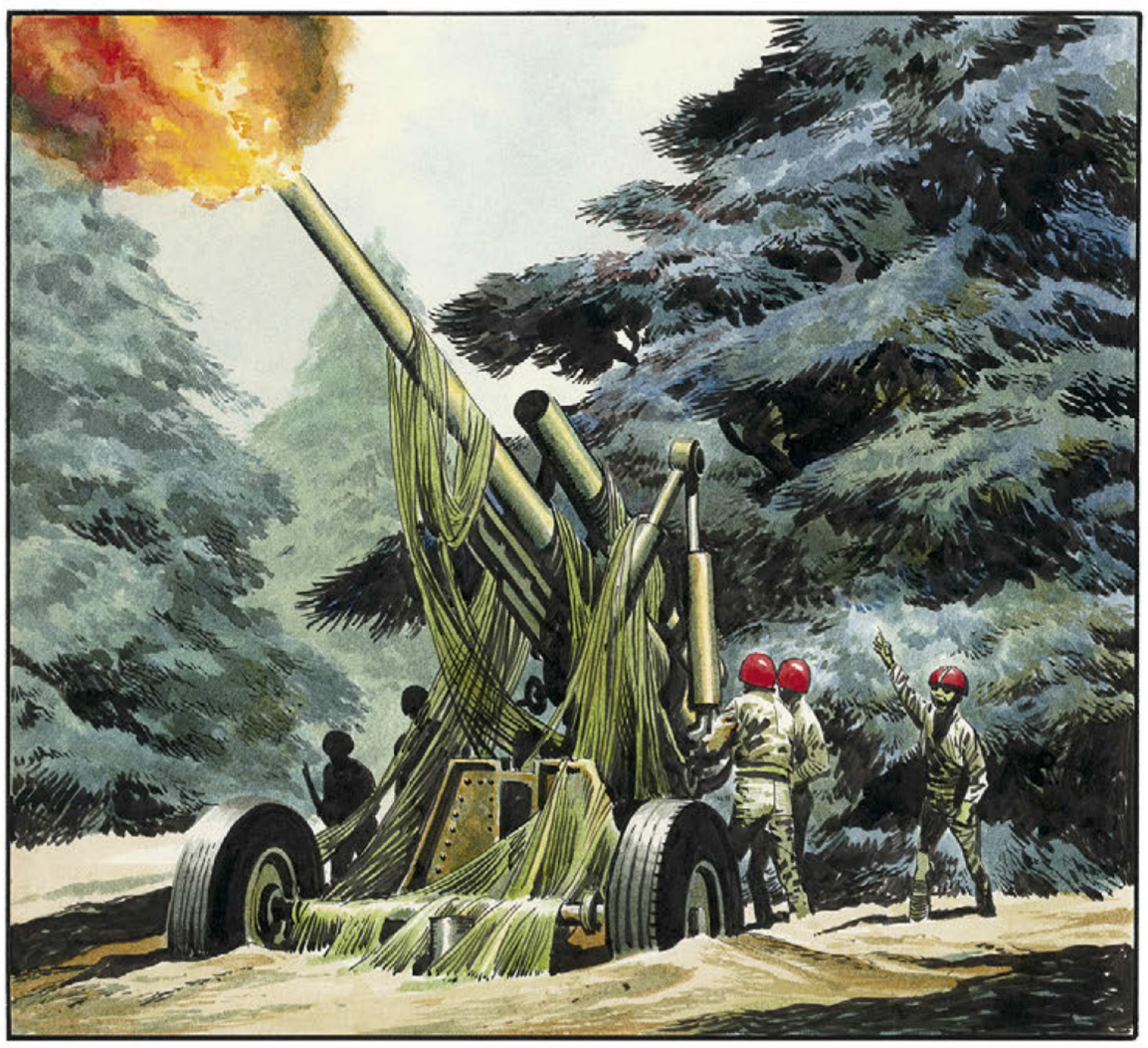

NEXT DAY, AS USUAL, A TRIGAN AIR PATROL FLEW OVER THE LAND OF LOKA, SEARCHING FOR SIGNS OF TROUBLE...
NOTHING HERE... THESE PATROLS ARE A WASTE OF TIME. THE LOKANS KNOW WHEN THEY ARE BEATEN!

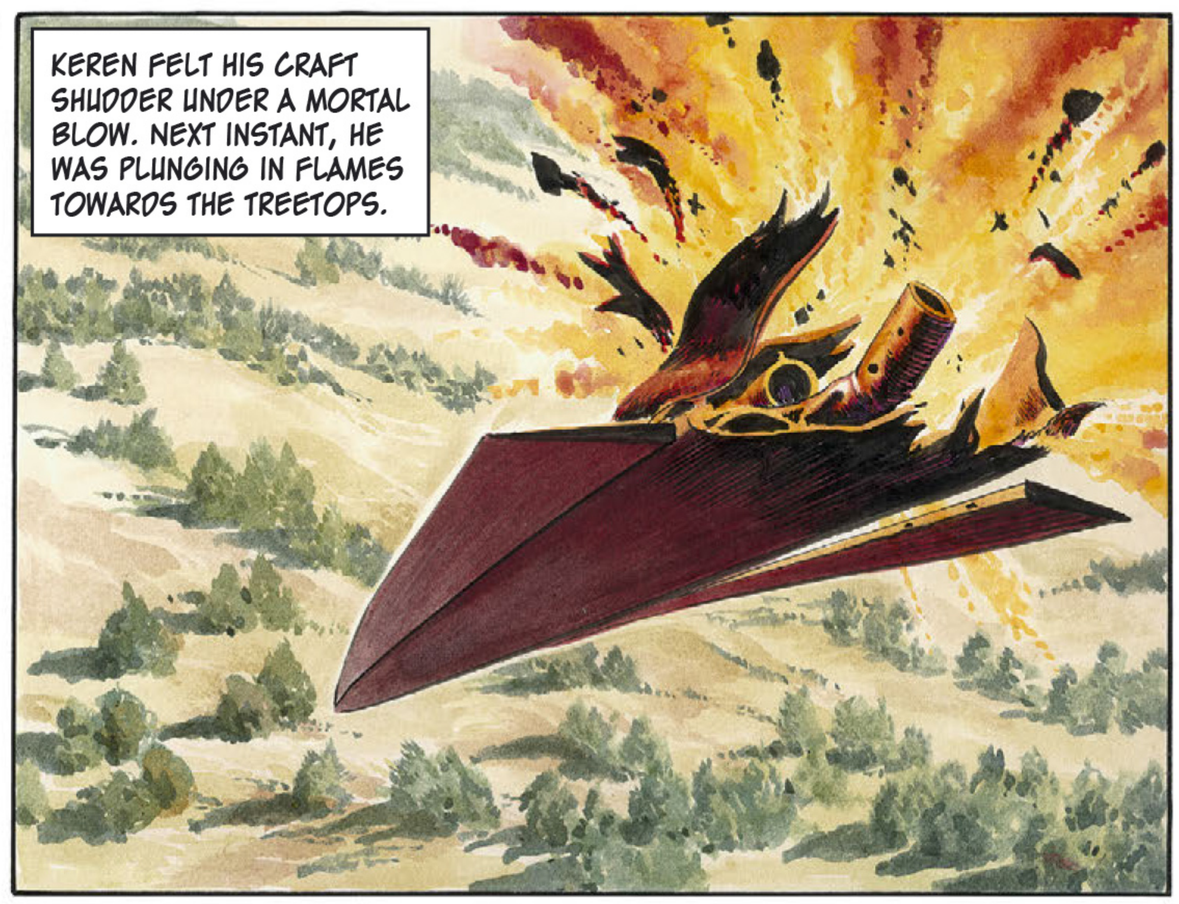
LITTLE DID THE PILOT KNOW THAT A HOST OF ARMED LOKANS WATCHED HIM FROM THE COVER OF THE TREES BELOW... AND KALEK WAS AMONGST THEM...
A FEW MORE WEEKS... WHEN TRIGO'S BEHAVIOUR HAS DRIVEN HIS PEOPLE TO DESTROY HIM, THEN WE STRIKE!

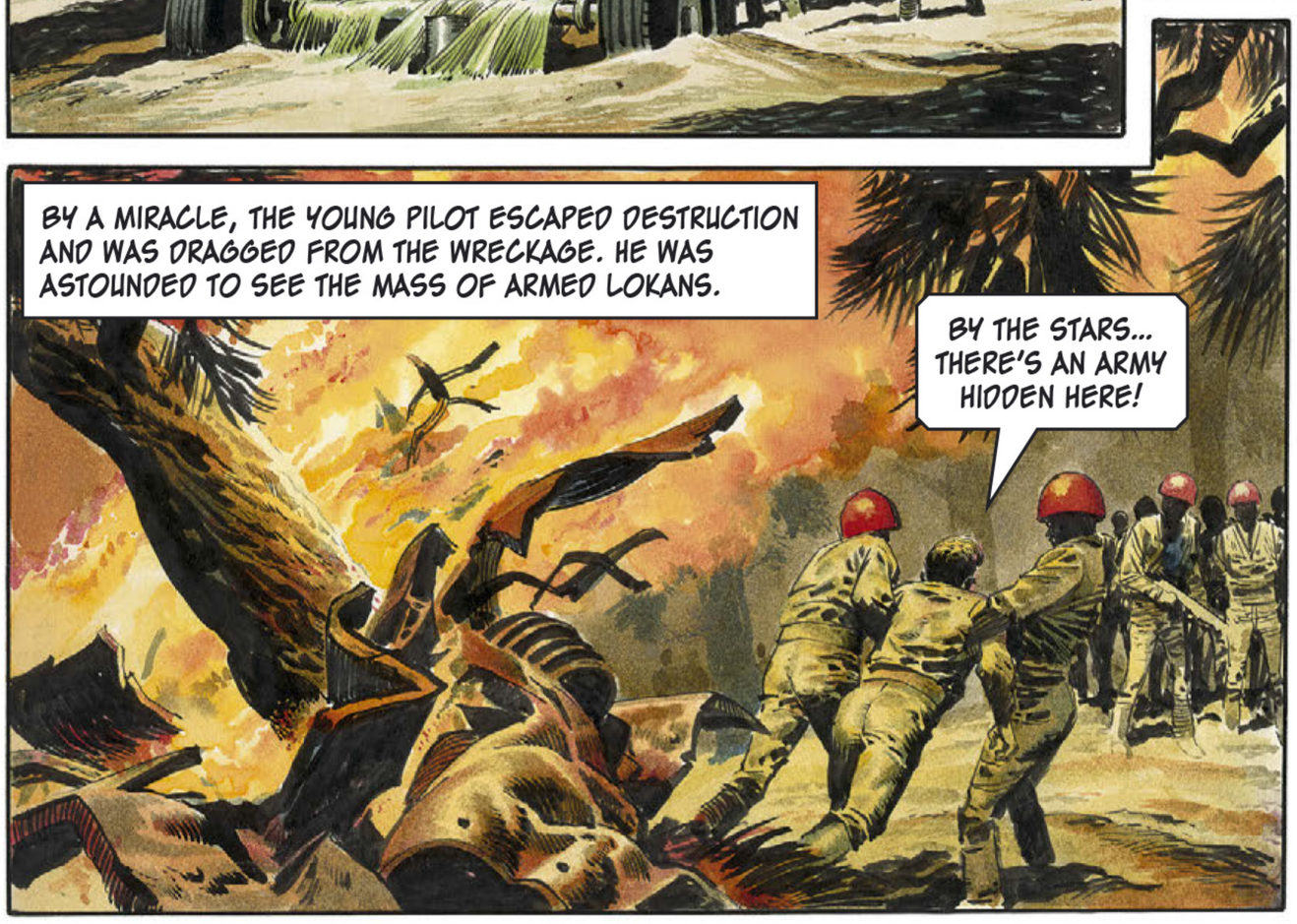

FLYING LOW OVER THE WOODED PLAIN OF LOKA, A TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WHEELED AND CIRCLED...
NO SIGN OF TROUBLE... I'LL RETURN TO BASE...

KEREN WAS AT THE CONTROLS. SUDDENLY, HE SAW THE FLASH OF SUNLIGHT GLINTING ON STEEL AMONGST THE TREES BELOW.
THERE'S SOMETHING DOWN THERE!

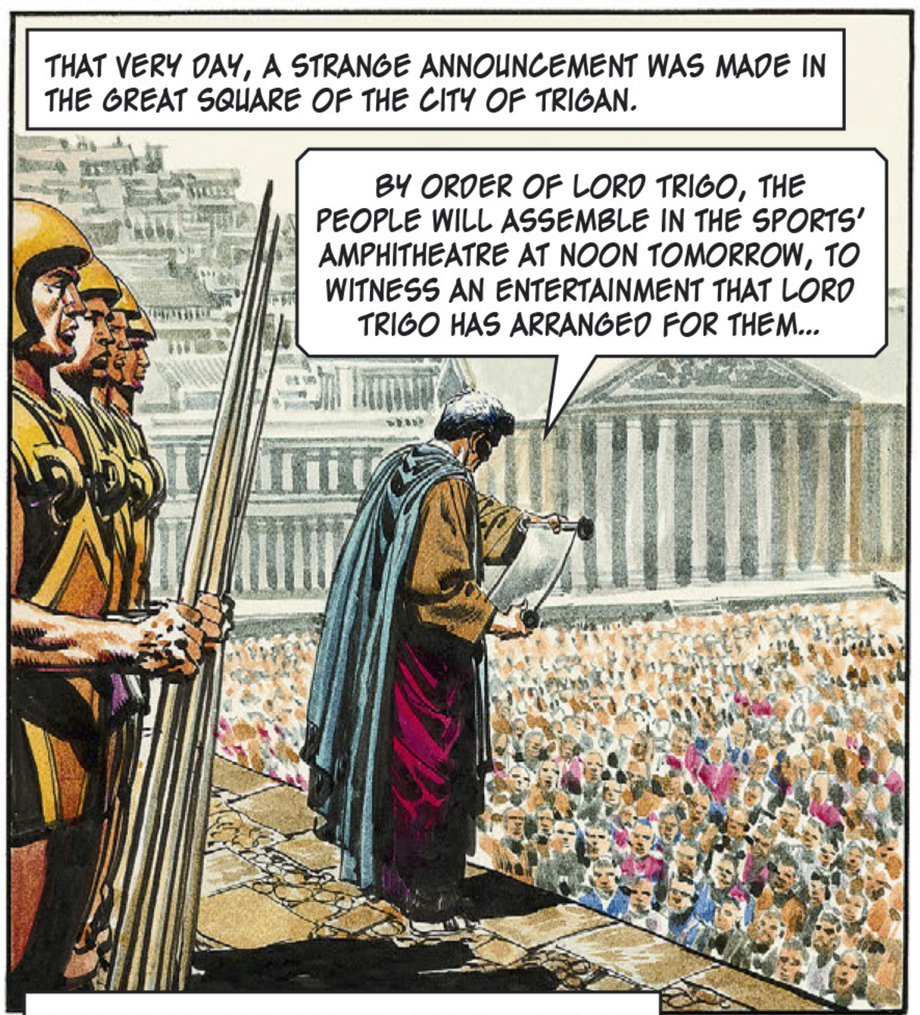

THE SECRET LOKAN ARMY WAS HIDDEN BELOW. WHEN HE SAW THE CRAFT DESCENDING TO INVESTIGATE, KALEK SNARLED A SAVAGE ORDER.
HE'S SEEN US! SHOOT HIM DOWN!



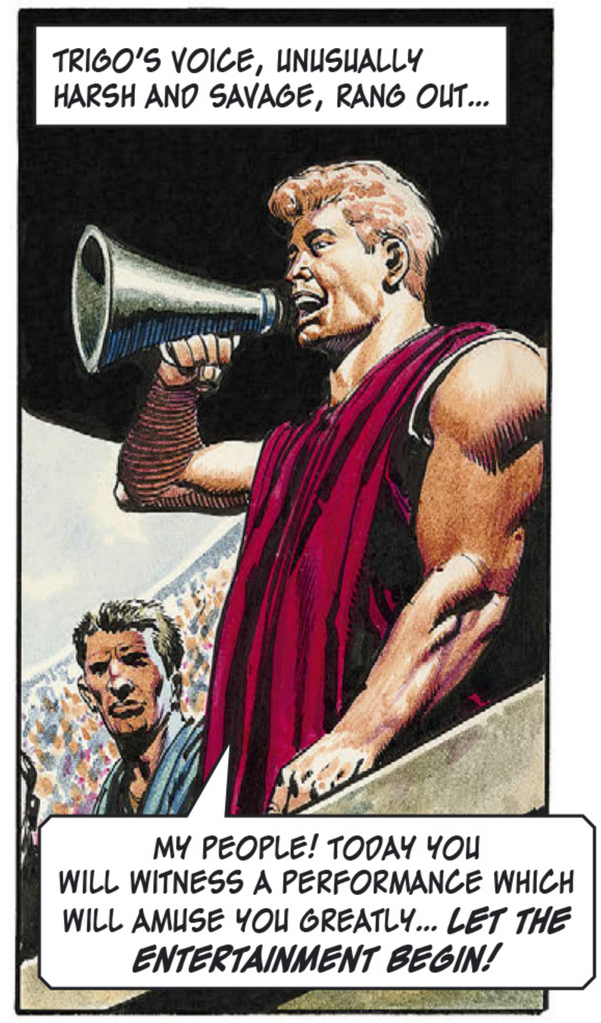

KEREN FELT HIS CRAFT SHUDDER UNDER A MORTAL BLOW. NEXT INSTANT, HE WAS PLUNGING IN FLAMES TOWARDS THE TREETOPS.


BY A MIRACLE, THE YOUNG PILOT ESCAPED DESTRUCTION AND WAS DRAGGED FROM THE WRECKAGE. HE WAS ASTOUNDED TO SEE THE MASS OF ARMED LOKANS.
BY THE STARS... THERE'S AN ARMY HIDDEN HERE!

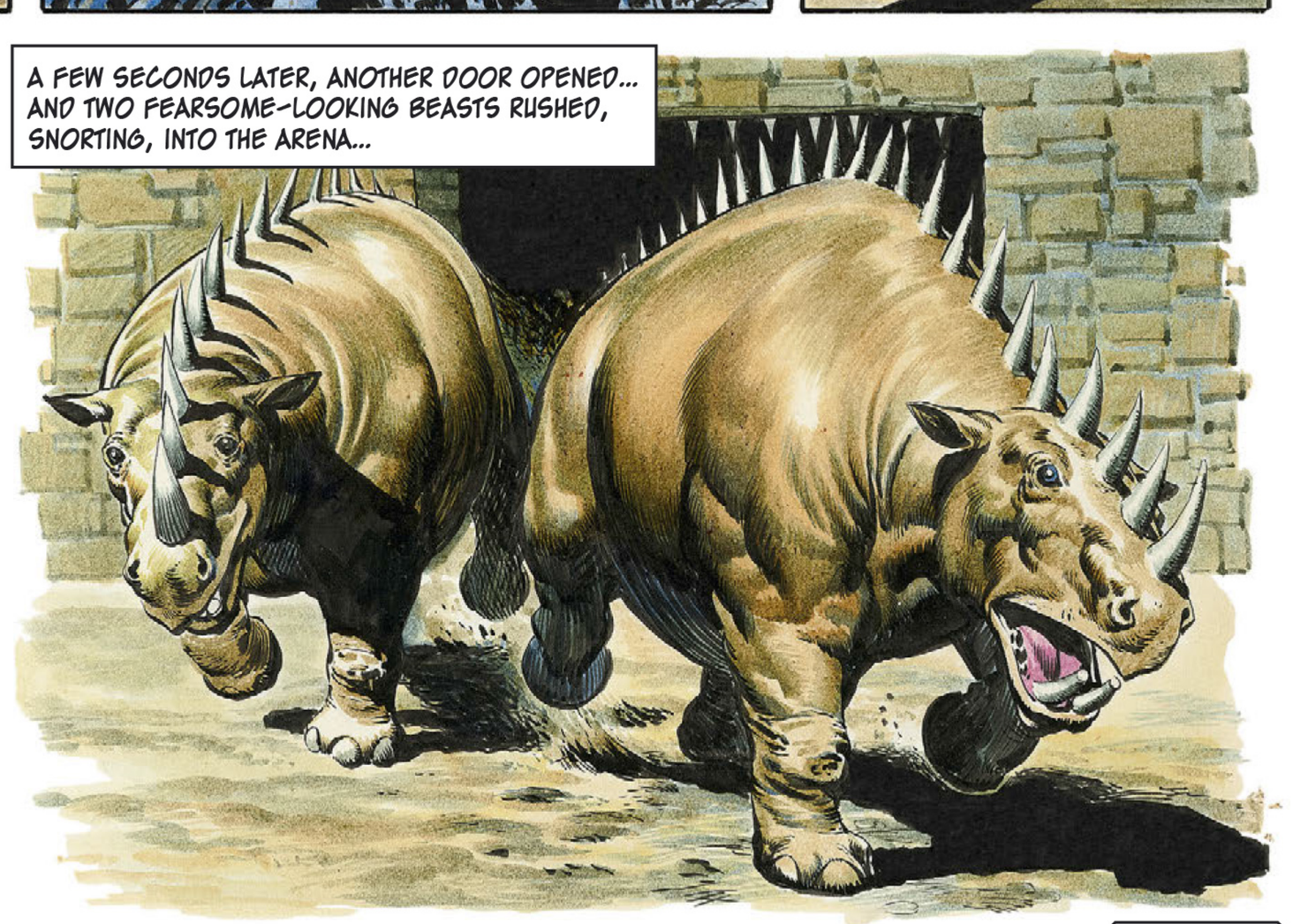
KALEK, THE LEADER OF THE REBELS, GRINNED TRIUMPHANTLY...
YES! AND WE WILL OVERTHROW THE TRIGANS... AS SOON AS THEY HAVE GOT RID OF TRIGO!


THAT VERY DAY, A STRANGE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF THE CITY OF TRIGAN.
BY ORDER OF LORD TRIGO, THE PEOPLE WILL ASSEMBLE IN THE SPORTS' AMPHITHEATRE AT NOON TOMORROW, TO WITNESS AN ENTERTAINMENT THAT LORD TRIGO HAS ARRANGED FOR THEM...

AT NOON THE NEXT DAY, THE CITIZENS GATHERED IN THE VAST AMPHITHEATRE, STILL WONDERING WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT...
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?
WE'LL SOON FIND OUT... HERE COMES LORD TRIGO!

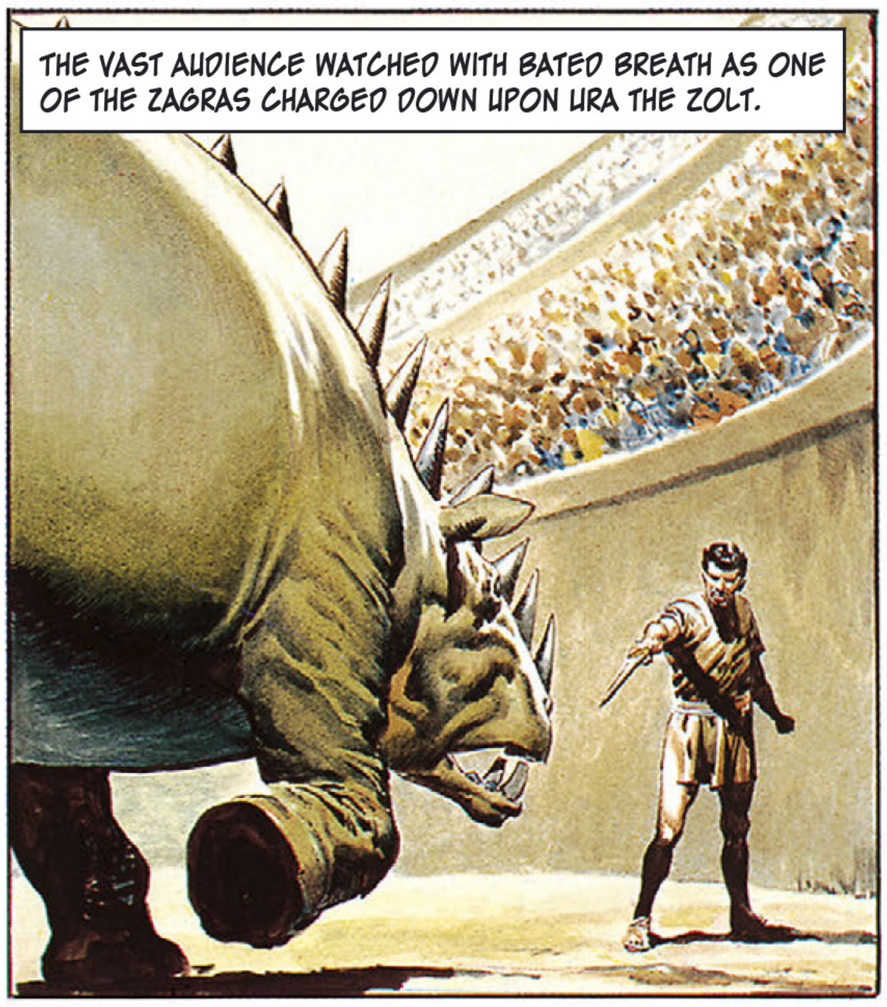

TRIGO'S VOICE, UNUSUALLY HARSH AND SAVAGE, RANG OUT...
MY PEOPLE! TODAY YOU WILL WITNESS A PERFORMANCE WHICH WILL AMUSE YOU GREATLY... LET THE ENTERTAINMENT BEGIN!

A DOOR OPENED INTO THE ARENA... AND THE MASSIVE FIGURE OF TRIGO'S FAITHFUL ZOLT SLAVE, URA, STEPPED INTO THE SUNLIGHT...
WHAT'S URA DOING DOWN THERE?
AND WHY THE SWORD?

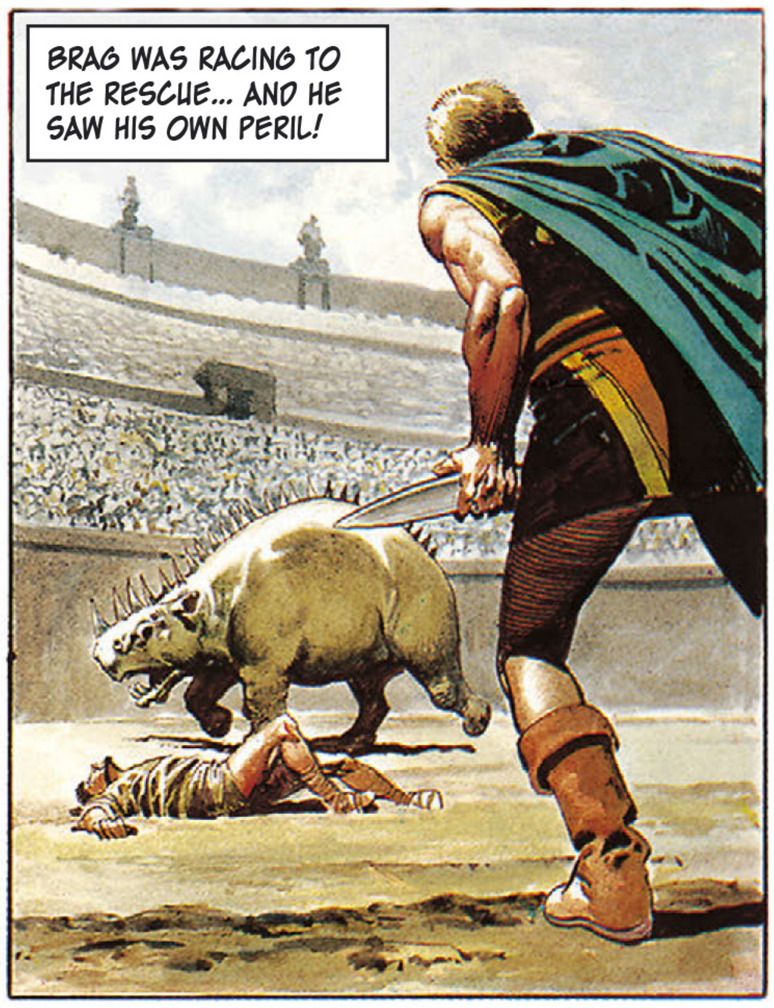

A FEW SECONDS LATER, ANOTHER DOOR OPENED... AND TWO FEARSOME-LOOKING BEASTS RUSHED, SNORTING, INTO THE ARENA...

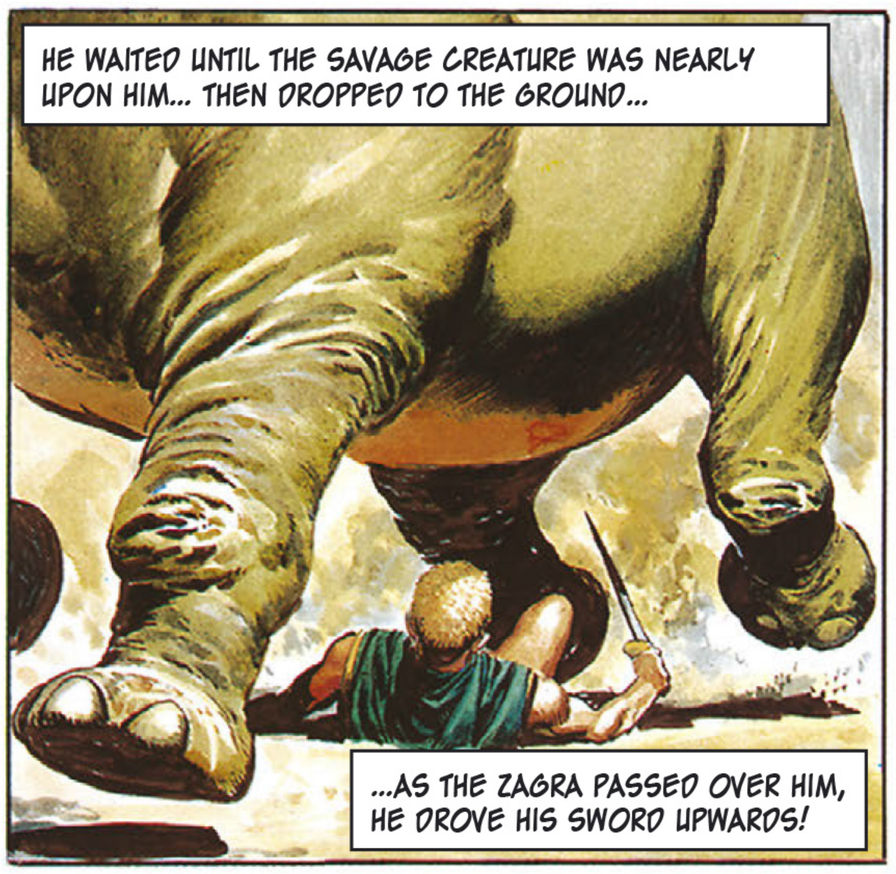
AS ONE MAN, THE VAST AUDIENCE ROSE TO ITS FEET IN ALARM... AND BRAG STARED UNBELIEVINGLY AT HIS BROTHER...
TRIGO! YOU CAN'T MEAN THIS! ALL THE ZOLT DID WAS UPSET A GOBLET... YOU CAN'T CONDEMN HIM TO FIGHT TWO ZAGRAS WITH A PUNY SWORD!
WHY NOT? I'M THE LORD OF TRIGAN AND I CAN AMUSE MYSELF HOW I PLEASE!

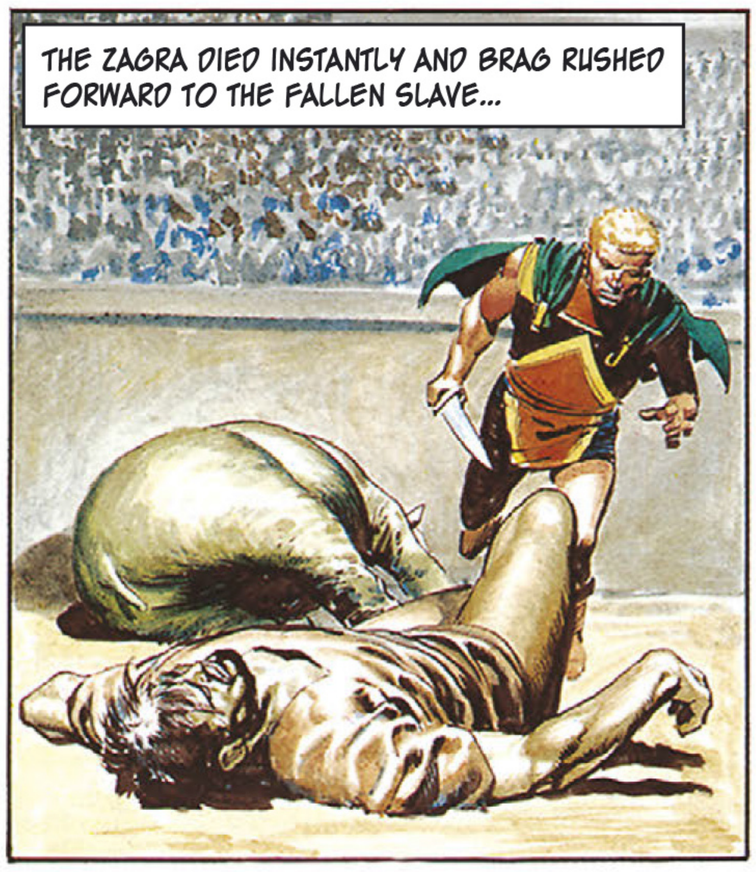
WITHOUT HESITATION, GALLANT BRAG DREW HIS SWORD... AND VAULTED INTO THE ARENA.
BRAG... NO!
THEN, BY THE STARS, HE'LL NOT FIGHT ALONE!
LET HIM GO... IT WILL BE ALL THE MORE AMUSING WITH TWO OF THEM!


THE VAST AUDIENCE WATCHED WITH BATED BREATH AS ONE OF THE ZAGRAS CHARGED DOWN UPON URA THE ZOLT.

NEXT INSTANT, URA WAS SWEPT SKYWARDS BY THE MASSIVE HORNED HEAD OF THE ZAGRA.


BRAG WAS RACING TO THE RESCUE... AND HE SAW HIS OWN PERIL!


HE WAITED UNTIL THE SAVAGE CREATURE WAS NEARLY UPON HIM... THEN DROPPED TO THE GROUND...
...AS THE ZAGRA PASSED OVER HIM, HE DROVE HIS SWORD UPWARDS!

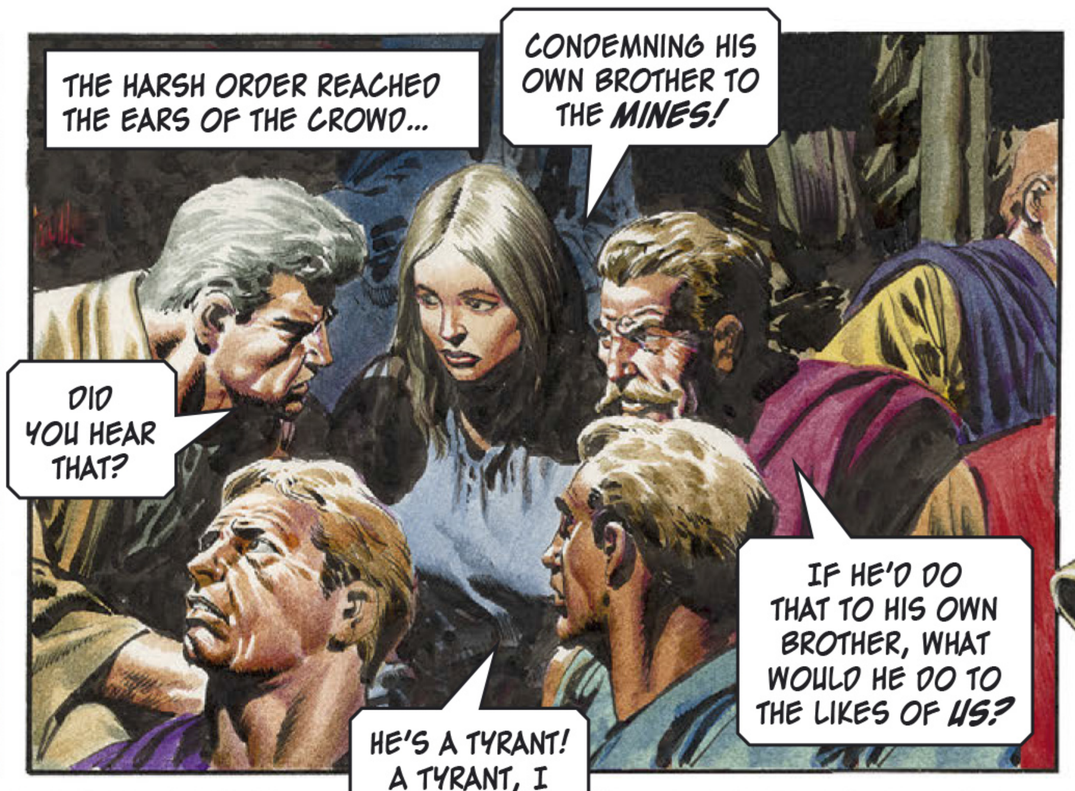

THE ZAGRA DIED INSTANTLY AND BRAG RUSHED FORWARD TO THE FALLEN SLAVE...

HE SNATCHED URA FROM UNDER THE VERY HORNS OF THE SECOND ZAGRA...

...AND LEAPED FOR SAFETY WITH THE MADDENED MONSTER AT HIS HEELS!

TRIGO WAS BESIDE HIMSELF WITH FURY AT HIS BROTHER'S ACTION.
HOW DARE YOU INTERFERE WITH THE AMUSEMENT I HAVE PROVIDED FOR MY PEOPLE!
TRIGO... YOU MUST HAVE TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES...

LISTEN TO ME, TRIGO...
SILENCE! GUARDS, TAKE AWAY MY FINE BROTHER AND HIS SLAVE FRIEND... AND PUT THEM TO WORK IN THE MINES!

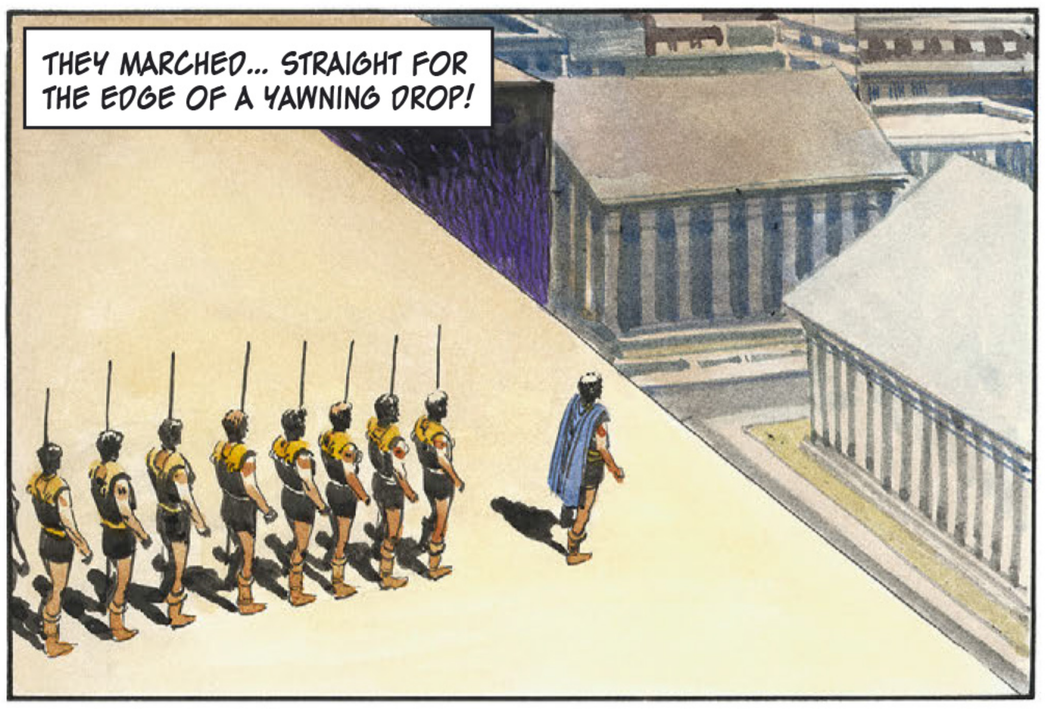

THE HARSH ORDER REACHED THE EARS OF THE CROWD...
CONDEMNING HIS OWN BROTHER TO THE MINES!
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
IF HE'D DO THAT TO HIS OWN BROTHER, WHAT WOULD HE DO TO THE LIKES OF US?
HE'S A TYRANT! A TYRANT, I TELL YOU!

BRAG AND THE ZOLT WERE DRAGGED AWAY AND TRIGO TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO THE CROWD AGAIN. BUT THE GOOD-NATURED PEOPLE OF TRIGAN HAD HAD ENOUGH!
MY PEOPLE! SIT DOWN AND RELAX... THERE IS MORE ENTERTAINMENT TO FOLLOW, EQUALLY AMUSING...

LATER, GAZING ABOUT HIM AT THE EMPTY AMPHITHEATRE, TRIGO RAVED AND SHOUTED...
HOW DARE THEY? AM I NOT LORD TRIGO THE MIGHTY? BY THE STARS, THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN WILL REGRET THIS INSULT! I'LL MAKE THEM WISH THEY'D NEVER BEEN BORN!

IN THE MINES, WHERE ONLY THE WORST CRIMINALS WERE SENT, BRAG LABOURED BESIDE URA THE ZOLT... AND HIS HONEST HEART GRIEVED...
I FEAR FOR MY BROTHER... BUT I FEAR MORE FOR OUR PEOPLE NOW THAT HE HAS CHANGED SO TERRIBLY!

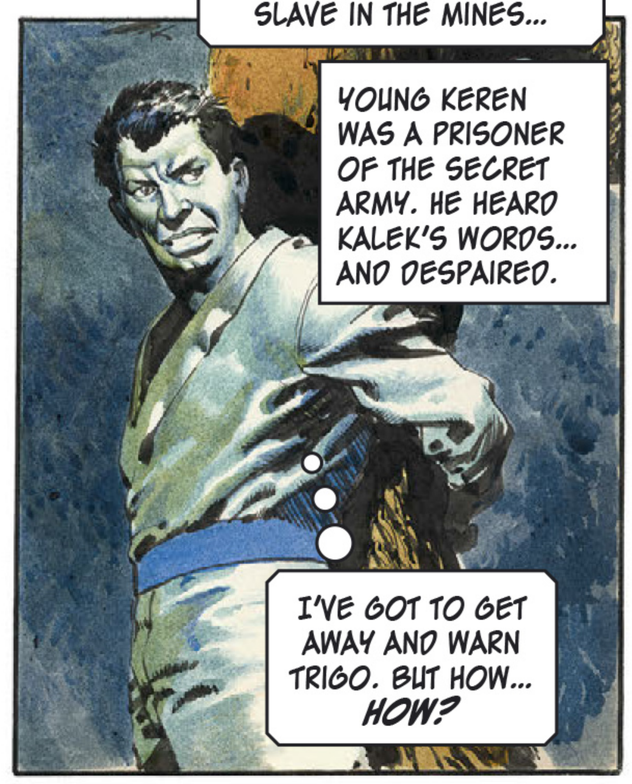
ONE DAY, PEOPLE IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF THE CITY SAW TWO ATMOSPHERE CRAFT LOWERING A MASSIVE STATUE INTO PLACE.
IT'S A GIANT STATUE OF LORD TRIGO!
THE CAPTAIN OF THE PALACE GUARDS READ A PROCLAMATION...
TO ALL PEOPLE OF THE CITY... IN FUTURE, ALL PASSERS-BY WILL PROSTRATE THEMSELVES BEFORE THE STATUE OF LORD TRIGO! FAILURE TO DO SO WILL BE A PUNISHABLE OFFENCE!
KARKAS THE MERCHANT WAS THE RICHEST MAN IN TRIGAN. HE WAS ALSO PROUD AND STUBBORN. SHORTLY AFTER, HE WALKED PAST THE STATUE... AND-
HEY! YOU!
ARE YOU ADDRESSING ME?
YOU FAILED TO PROSTRATE YOURSELF BEFORE THE STATUE OF LORD TRIGO!
I PROSTRATE MYSELF BEFORE NO MAN! WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS... A GOD? I'D RATHER PAY A FINE THAN DO SUCH A THING!
KARKAS WAS TAKEN BEFORE THE CITY MAGISTRATE... BUT IT WAS NOT MERELY A MATTER OF PAYING A FINE!
WHA-A-A-AT?
THE PENALTY... YOU WILL LABOUR FOR LIFE IN THE MINES... AND YOUR PROPERTY BECOMES THE PROPERTY OF LORD TRIGO!
THEY DRAGGED HIM AWAY, PROTESTING...
HE'S A TYRANT... A TYRANT, I TELL YOU!
LATER, TRIGO STOOD AT THE WINDOW OVERLOOKING THE SQUARE. HE SMILED SAVAGELY AS HE SAW THE PEOPLE PROSTRATE BEFORE HIS STATUE.
I'LL TEACH THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY THE MEANING OF OBEDIENCE!
AS HE WATCHED, HE MUNCHED THE POISONED SWEETMEATS THAT HAD NOW BECOME A CRAVING...
NEXT, TRIGO ORDERED THE PALACE GUARDS TO ASSEMBLE ON THE BATTLEMENTS.
CAPTAIN! YOU WILL MARCH YOUR MEN... THAT WAY!
YES, LORD TRIGO!

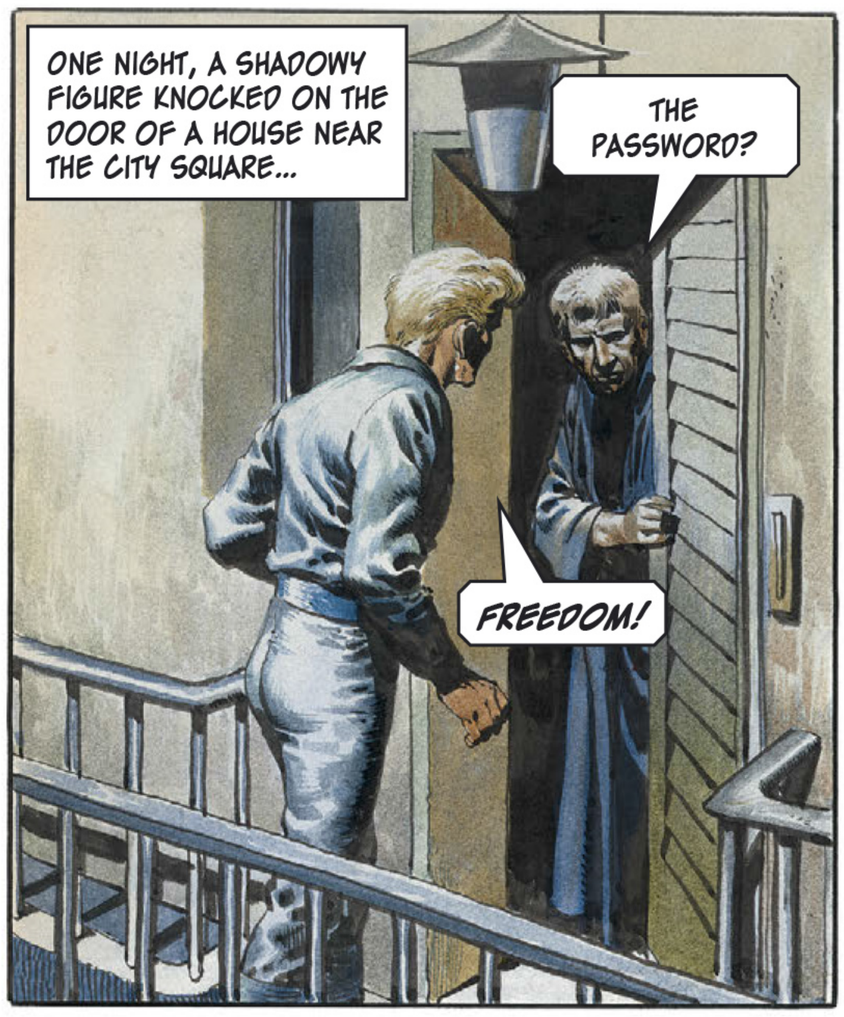

THEY MARCHED... STRAIGHT FOR THE EDGE OF A YAWNING DROP!

AT THE LAST MOMENT, THE CAPTAIN RAISED HIS ARM!
HALT!

WHY DO YOU STOP? IT IS A SOLDIER'S DUTY TO OBEY!
IT IS NOT A SOLDIER'S DUTY TO DIE AT THE WHIM OF A TYRANT!
YOU WILL REGRET THOSE WORDS, WRETCH... OH, YES, YOU WILL REGRET THEM BITTERLY AS YOU SLAVE IN THE MINES...

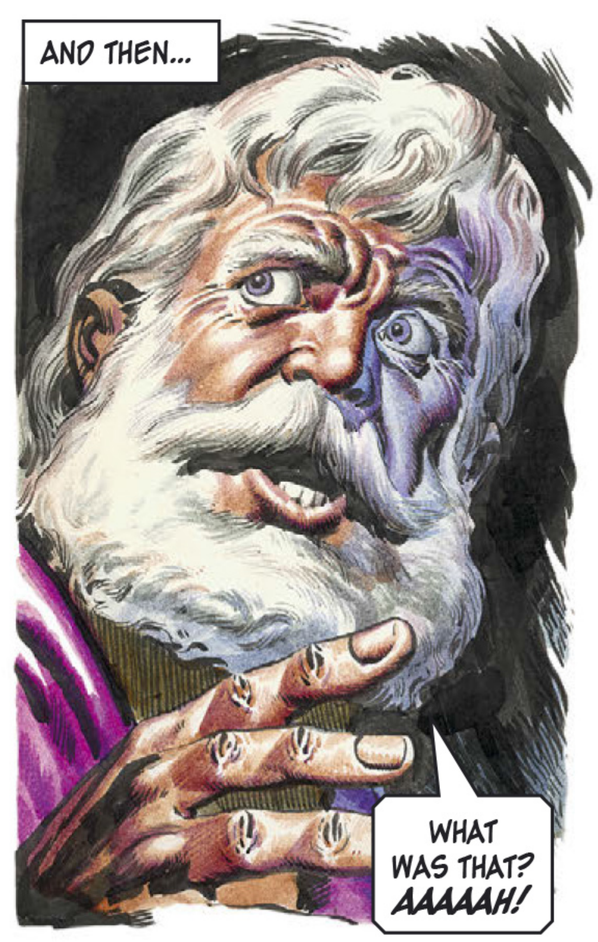
MEANWHILE, IN THE HIDDEN ENCAMPMENT OF THE SECRET LOKAN ARMY, THE REBEL LEADER KALEK WAS ADDRESSING HIS MEN...
I HAVE NEWS FROM OUR SPY IN TRIGAN... OUR PLAN GOES WELL. THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY ARE ALL READY TO OVERTHROW TRIGO AND, WHEN THAT HAPPENS, WE WILL MARCH... AND DESTROY THEM!


YOUNG KEREN WAS A PRISONER OF THE SECRET ARMY. HE HEARD KALEK'S WORDS... AND DESPAIRED.
I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY AND WARN TRIGO. BUT HOW... HOW?


ONE NIGHT, A SHADOWY FIGURE KNOCKED ON THE DOOR OF A HOUSE NEAR THE CITY SQUARE...
THE PASSWORD?
FREEDOM!

JANNO, THE NEPHEW OF TRIGO, WAS ALLOWED TO ENTER...
YOU WERE NOT FOLLOWED? IT WILL MEAN DEATH FOR ALL OF US IF TRIGO'S GUARDS KNOW OF OUR SECRET MEETING!
NO ONE SAW ME COME HERE.

IN THE HOUSE WERE GATHERED THE PRINCIPAL CITIZENS OF TRIGAN... AND WISE OLD PERIC GRIMLY ADDRESSED THEM...
I WAS ONCE PROUD TO BE A FRIEND OF TRIGO, AND JANNO HERE WAS HIS FAVOURITE NEPHEW... BUT TRIGO IS GREATLY CHANGED. HE HAS BECOME A MONSTER, A TYRANT...

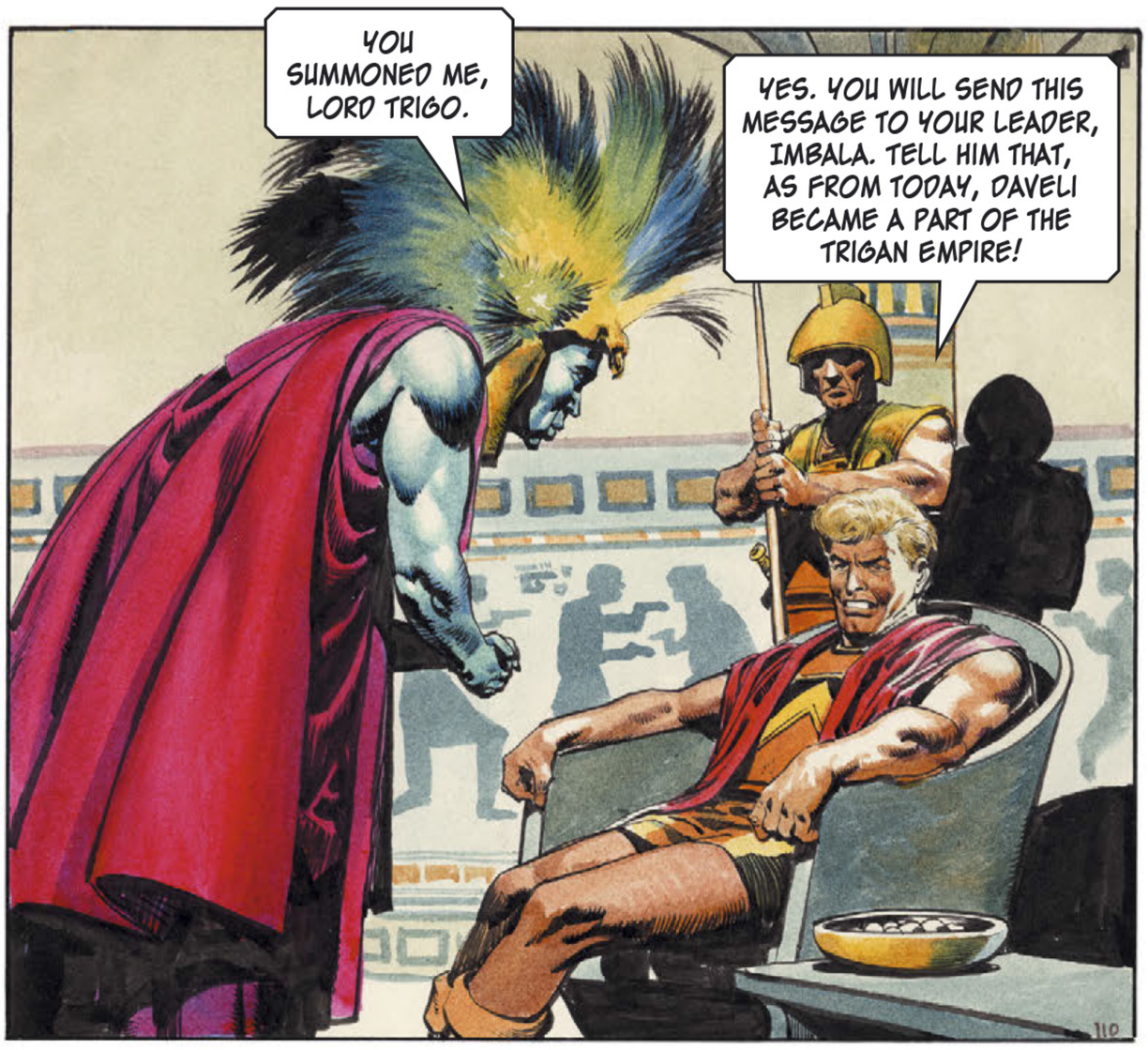

AND THEN...
WHAT WAS THAT? AAAAAH!

A PARTY OF PALACE GUARDS BURST INTO THE ROOM!
A GATHERING OF TRAITORS, EH?

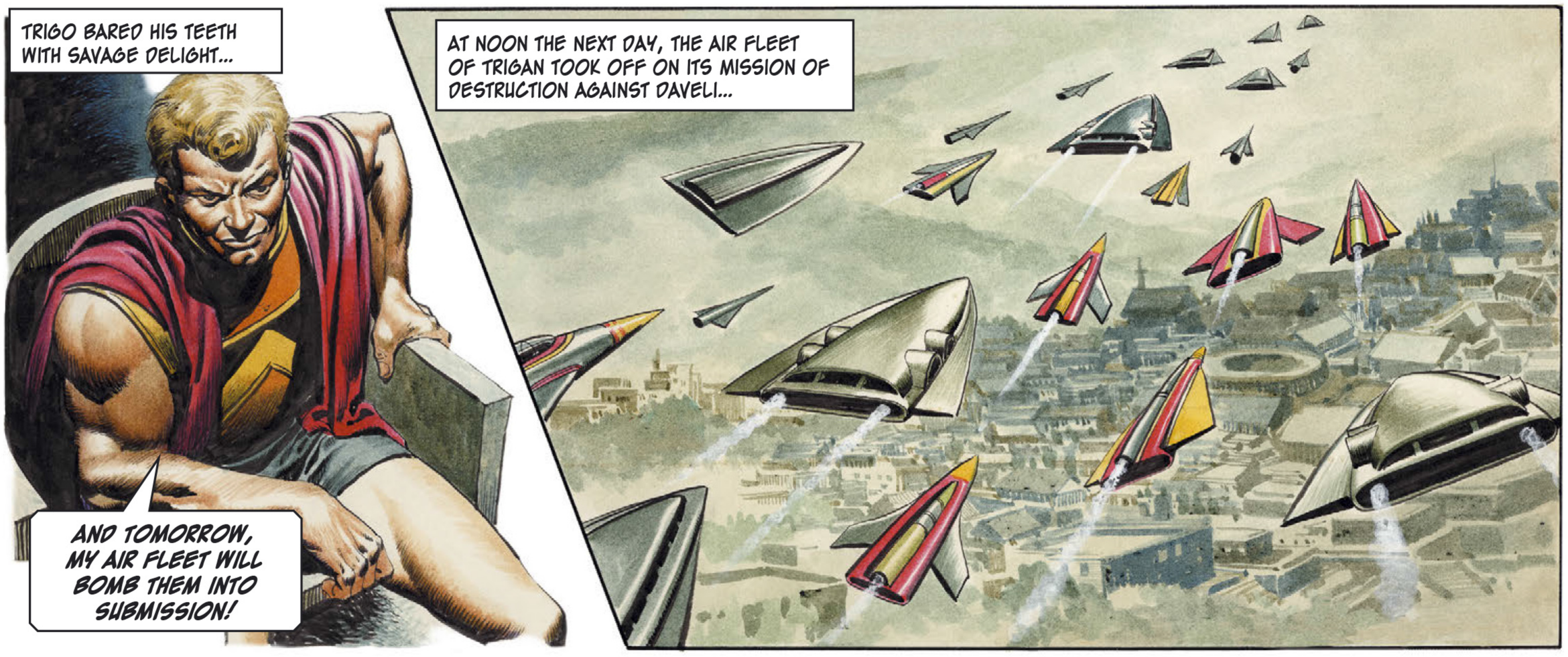
OLD PERIC FACED THE CAPTAIN FEARLESSLY.
DON'T BOTHER TO DENY IT... YOU WERE PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW LORD TRIGO!
WE ARE PLOTTING TO RID TRIGAN OF A MONSTER AND A TYRANT!

AND THE CAPTAIN HELD OUT HIS HAND!
CARRY ON, PERIC... WE ARE WITH YOU!
THANK THE STARS!

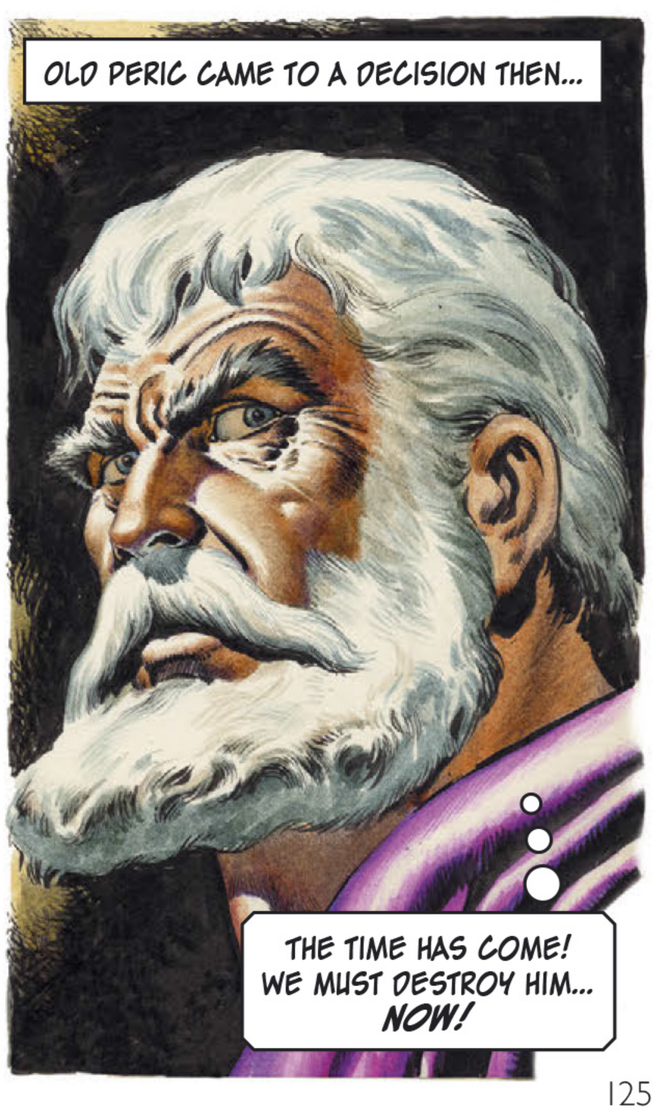
UNAWARE OF THE PERIL CLOSING IN ABOUT HIM, TRIGO SAT IN HIS PALACE WITH FRESH ACTS OF TYRANNY TEEMING IN HIS TORTURED MIND...
THE AMBASSADOR OF DAVELI, LORD TRIGO.


YOU SUMMONED ME, LORD TRIGO.
YES. YOU WILL SEND THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR LEADER, IMBALA. TELL HIM THAT, AS FROM TODAY, DAVELI BECAME A PART OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

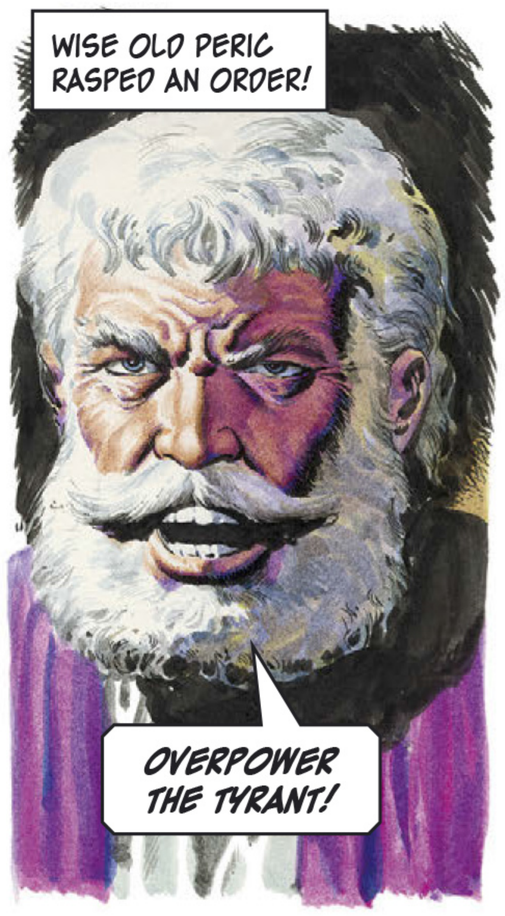
THE AMBASSADOR PROTESTED...
YOU CANNOT MEAN THIS, LORD TRIGO! IMBALA IS YOUR BLOOD-BROTHER... HIS SON, KEREN, WAS RECENTLY LOST WHILST SERVING IN THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET... THE PEOPLE OF DAVELI ARE YOUR FRIENDS!
NOT MY FRIENDS... MY VASSALS!


TRIGO BARED HIS TEETH WITH SAVAGE DELIGHT...
AND TOMORROW, MY AIR FLEET WILL BOMB THEM INTO SUBMISSION!
AT NOON THE NEXT DAY, THE AIR FLEET OF TRIGAN TOOK OFF ON ITS MISSION OF DESTRUCTION AGAINST DAVELI...

TRIGO WATCHED THEM GO...
LET US HOPE THAT THE PEOPLE OF DAVELI DO NOT SUBMIT TOO QUICKLY... I WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT THERE WILL BE MUCH DESTRUCTION!


OLD PERIC CAME TO A DECISION THEN...
THE TIME HAS COME! WE MUST DESTROY HIM... NOW!

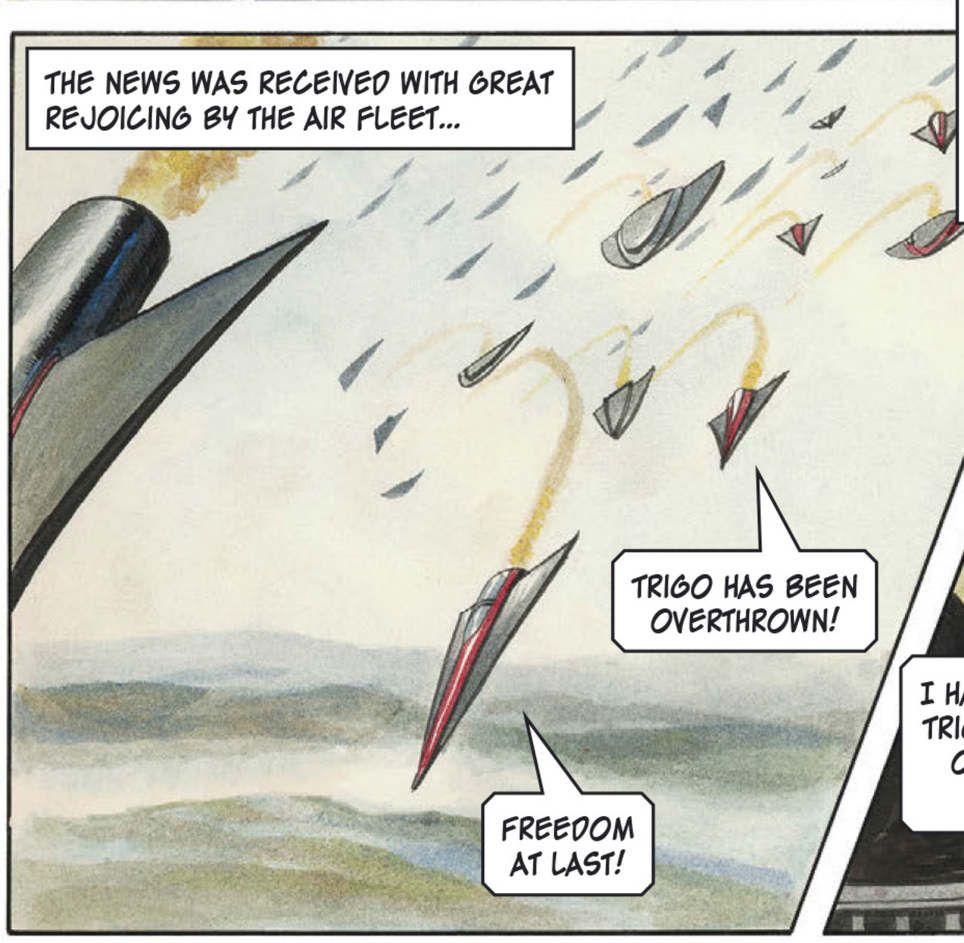
AS THE AIR FLEET VANISHED IN THE DISTANCE, TRIGO TURNED... TO FIND HIMSELF FACING A RING OF LEVELLED BLADES.
WHAT'S THIS...? MY OWN OFFICERS THREATENING ME?


WISE OLD PERIC RASPED AN ORDER!
OVERPOWER THE TYRANT!

TRIGO'S OWN SWORD CLEARED ITS SCABBARD AND THEN BEGAN A DESPERATE, HACKING AFFRAY...
REBELS! YOU DARE TO RAISE A HAND AGAINST TRIGO THE MIGHTY!

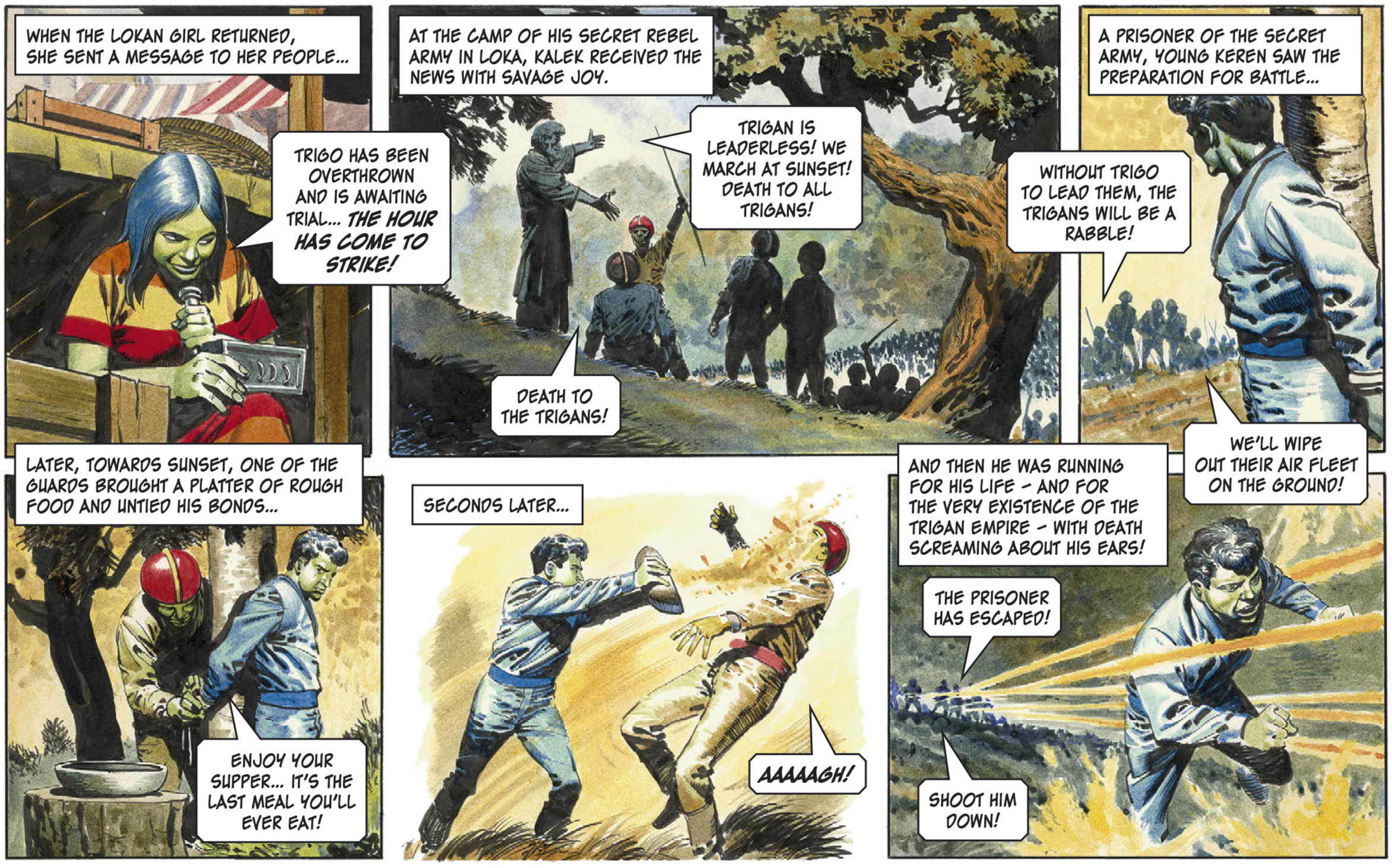
...BUT HE WAS GREATLY OUTNUMBERED AND THE FLAT OF A SWORD BLADE BROUGHT HIM CRASHING TO THE FLAGSTONES.
BY THE STARS, PERIC, YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS DAY'S WORK!
IT'S YOU WHO WILL PAY, TRIGO! TAKE HIM AWAY AND LOCK HIM UP!

AND THEN PERIC SPOKE TO THE AIR FLEET...
CALL OFF THE ATTACK ON DAVELI AND RETURN TO TRIGAN... THE TYRANT HAS BEEN OVERTHROWN!


THE NEWS WAS RECEIVED WITH GREAT REJOICING BY THE AIR FLEET...
TRIGO HAS BEEN OVERTHROWN!
FREEDOM AT LAST!

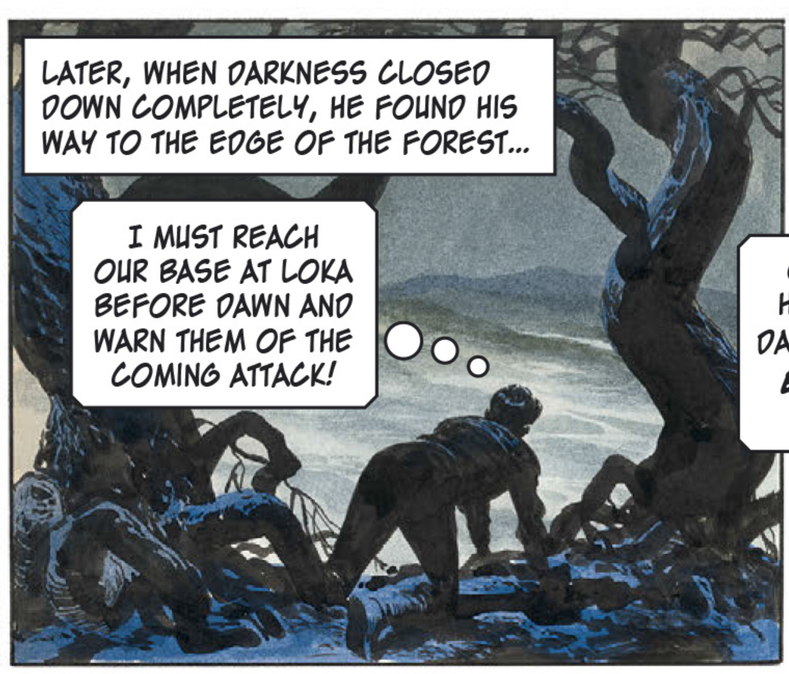
THAT SAME AFTERNOON, THE LOKAN GIRL WHO KEPT A SWEETMEAT STALL IN THE TRIGAN MARKET PLACE CALLED ROUND TO THE KITCHEN DOOR OF THE PALACE, WHERE SHE WAS GREETED BY PERIC'S DAUGHTER, SALVIA...
I HAVE BROUGHT LORD TRIGO'S DAILY SUPPLY OF HIS FAVOURITE SWEETMEATS.
I WILL SEE THAT HE GETS THEM... IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO FOR HIM IN HIS TERRIBLE PLIGHT.

AND SO, IN THE DUNGEON BENEATH THE PALACE WHERE THEY HAD LOCKED HIM, TRIGO WAS ABLE TO MUNCH THE SWEETMEATS THAT HAD BECOME A CRAVING...
THEY CAN'T DO THIS DO ME! I AM TRIGO, THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH OVER THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
...AND THE POISON IN THE CHORIS INFLAMED HIS MIND EVEN MORE!


WHEN THE LOKAN GIRL RETURNED, SHE SENT A MESSAGE TO HER PEOPLE...
TRIGO HAS BEEN OVERTHROWN AND IS AWAITING TRIAL... THE HOUR HAS COME TO STRIKE!
AT THE CAMP OF HIS SECRET REBEL ARMY IN LOKA, KALEK RECEIVED THE NEWS WITH SAVAGE JOY.
TRIGAN IS LEADERLESS! WE MARCH AT SUNSET! DEATH TO ALL TRIGANS!
DEATH TO THE TRIGANS!
A PRISONER OF THE SECRET ARMY, YOUNG KEREN SAW THE PREPARATION FOR BATTLE...
WITHOUT TRIGO TO LEAD THEM, THE TRIGANS WILL BE A RABBLE!
WE'LL WIPE OUT THEIR AIR FLEET ON THE GROUND!
LATER, TOWARDS SUNSET, ONE OF THE GUARDS BROUGHT A PLATTER OF ROUGH FOOD AND UNTIED HIS BONDS...
ENJOY YOUR SUPPER... IT'S THE LAST MEAL YOU'LL EVER EAT!
SECONDS LATER...
AAAAAGH!
AND THEN HE WAS RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE – AND FOR THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE – WITH DEATH SCREAMING ABOUT HIS EARS!
THE PRISONER HAS ESCAPED!
SHOOT HIM DOWN!

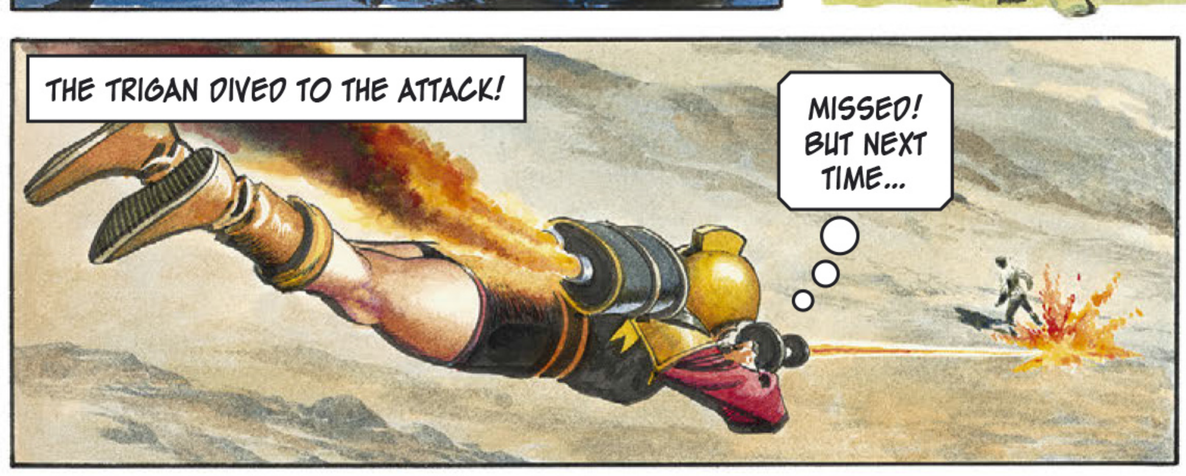
CRASHING THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH WITH HIS PURSUERS AT HIS HEELS, KEREN TRIPPED OVER A ROOT... AND FELL HEADLONG...

THIS SAVED HIS LIFE. HE LAY WHERE HE HAD FALLEN AND THE FURIOUS LOKANS SWEPT PAST HIS HIDING PLACE...
WHICH WAY DID HE GO?
THIS WAY...

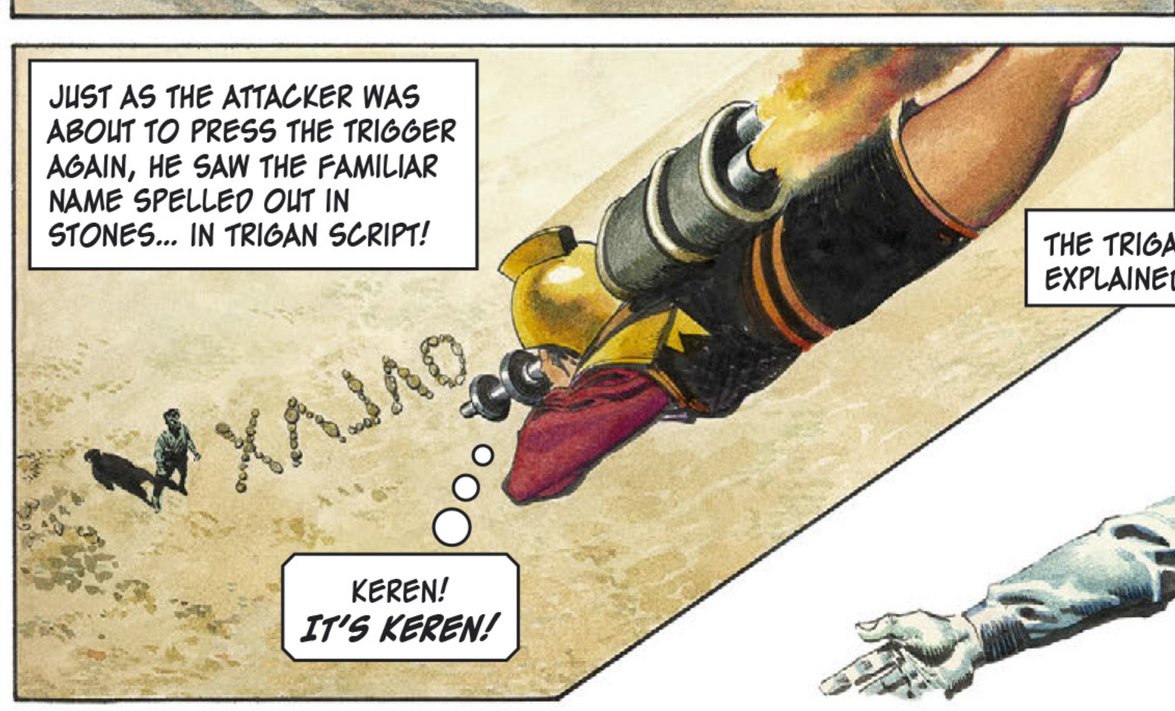

LATER, WHEN DARKNESS CLOSED DOWN COMPLETELY, HE FOUND HIS WAY TO THE EDGE OF THE FOREST...
I MUST REACH OUR BASE AT LOKA BEFORE DAWN AND WARN THEM OF THE COMING ATTACK!

HE STRUCK OUT ACROSS THE PLAIN... BUT HE HAD INJURED HIS LEG IN THE FALL AND THE GOING WAS PAINFULLY SLOW.
ONLY AN HOUR TILL DAWN... I'LL BE TOO LATE!

AT DAWN, A ONE-MAN AIR-PATROL FROM THE TRIGAN BASE AT LOKA CITY SAW THE SOLITARY FIGURE ON THE PLAIN BELOW AND THUMBED FORWARD THE SAFETY CATCH OF HIS DISINTEGRATOR GUN...
THE PLAIN IS FORBIDDEN TERRITORY... HE MUST BE A LOKAN REBEL!


THE TRIGAN DIVED TO THE ATTACK!
MISSED! BUT NEXT TIME...

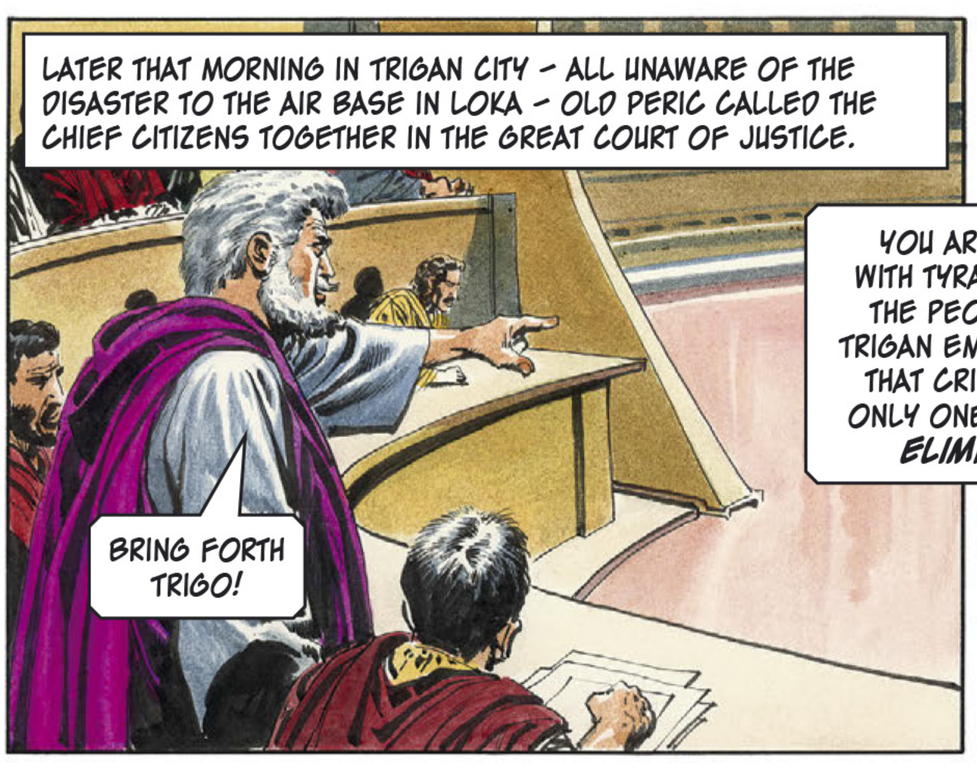
AS THE TRIGAN SOARED SKYWARDS FOR ANOTHER DIVE, KEREN GAZED DESPERATELY ABOUT HIM...
THIS IS MY ONLY CHANCE... IF HE SEES IT IN TIME!


JUST AS THE ATTACKER WAS ABOUT TO PRESS THE TRIGGER AGAIN, HE SAW THE FAMILIAR NAME SPELLED OUT IN STONES... IN TRIGAN SCRIPT!
LOKAN
KEREN! IT'S KEREN!

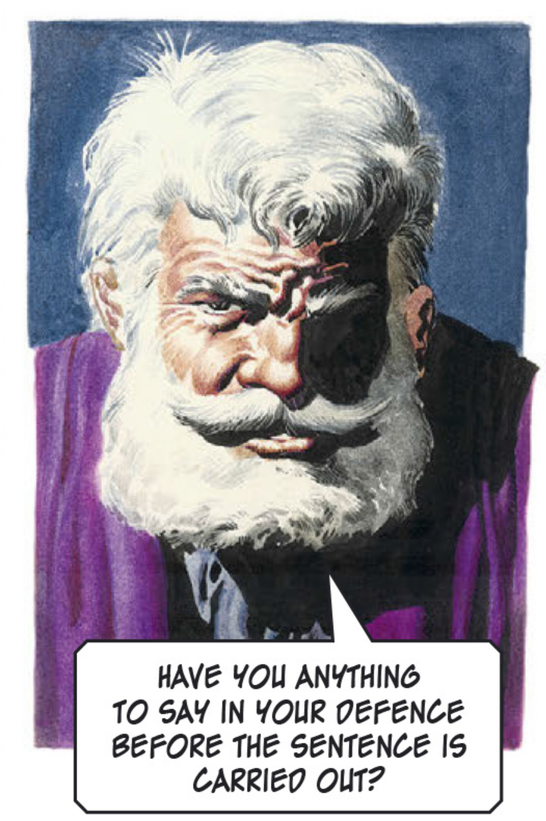
THE TRIGAN LANDED AND KEREN RAPIDLY EXPLAINED THE SITUATION TO HIS COMRADE...
CALLING AIR BASE... PATROL CALLING AIR BASE...
THE LOKANS ARE ATTACKING THE AIR BASE AT DAWN...

BUT THE ATTACK HAD ALREADY BEGUN...

CAUGHT COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE, THE TRIGANS WERE OVERWHELMED!
PATROL CALLING AIR BASE... DO YOU HEAR ME?

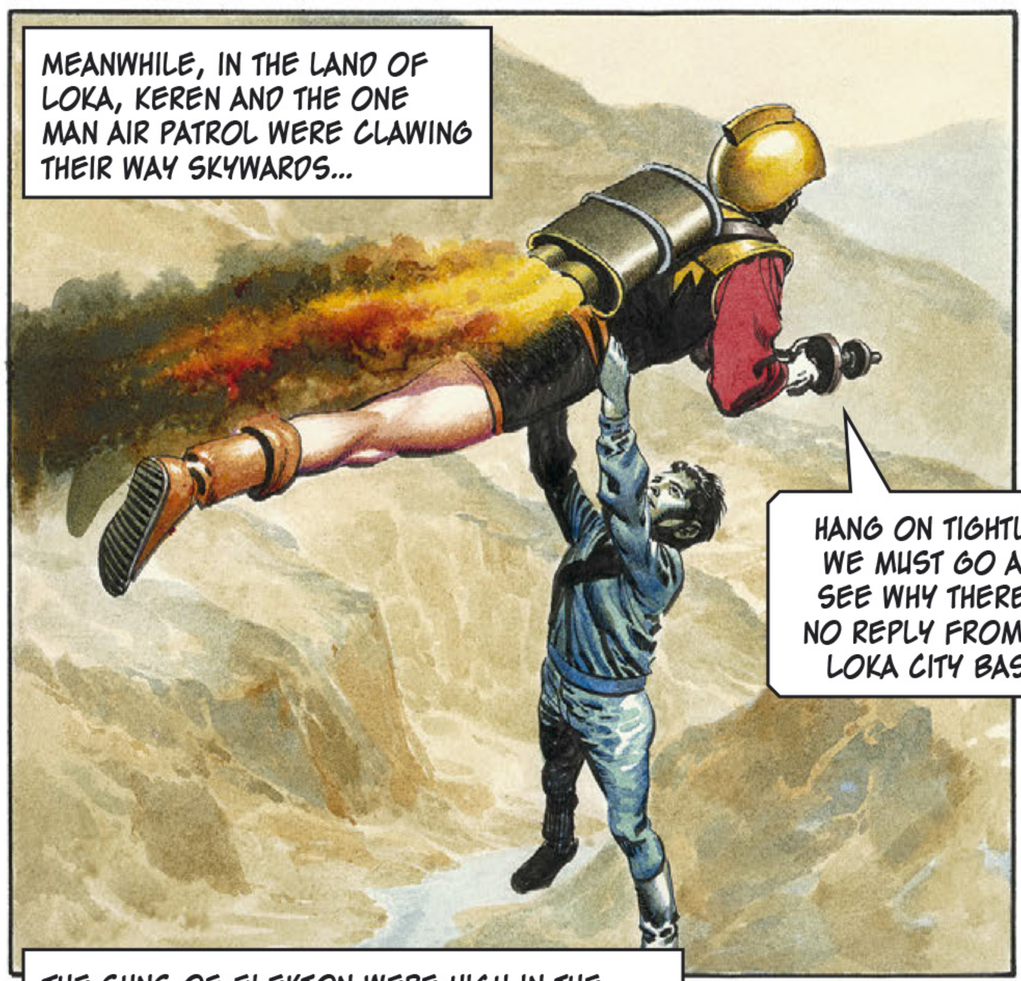

LATER THAT MORNING IN TRIGAN CITY – ALL UNAWARE OF THE DISASTER TO THE AIR BASE IN LOKA – OLD PERIC CALLED THE CHIEF CITIZENS TOGETHER IN THE GREAT COURT OF JUSTICE.
BRING FORTH TRIGO!

STRUGGLING LIKE A WILD BEAST IN THE GRIP OF TWO BRAWNY GUARDS, TRIGO WAS BROUGHT TO TRIAL...
YOU ARE CHARGED WITH TYRANNY AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AND FOR THAT CRIME THERE IS ONLY ONE SENTENCE... ELIMINATION!


HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO SAY IN YOUR DEFENCE BEFORE THE SENTENCE IS CARRIED OUT?

WITH A CRY OF FURY, TRIGO BURST FROM THE GRASP OF HIS GUARDS AND LEAPT FOR HIS OLD FRIEND PERIC, HIS CHAINS FLAILING...
NO DODDERING OLD REBEL CONDEMNS TRIGO THE MIGHTY!

PERIC WAS DASHED TO THE GROUND AND WOULD HAVE FARED BADLY BUT FOR THE SWIFT INTERVENTION OF AN OFFICER, WHO FELLED TRIGO WITH THE FLAT OF HIS BLADE.
THEN PERIC UTTERED THE DREAD SENTENCE.
YOU ARE A WILD BEAST... AND SOON YOU WILL BE NOTHING!
TAKE AWAY THE TYRANT... AND ELIMINATE HIM!


MEANWHILE, IN THE LAND OF LOKA, KEREN AND THE ONE MAN AIR PATROL WERE CLAWING THEIR WAY SKYWARDS...
HANG ON TIGHTLY... WE MUST GO AND SEE WHY THERE IS NO REPLY FROM THE LOKA CITY BASE!

PRESENTLY THEY SAW THE COLUMN OF SMOKE RISING FROM THE DEVASTATED BASE AND THEY KNEW THEY WERE TOO LATE!
THE LOKANS HAVE ALREADY STRUCK!

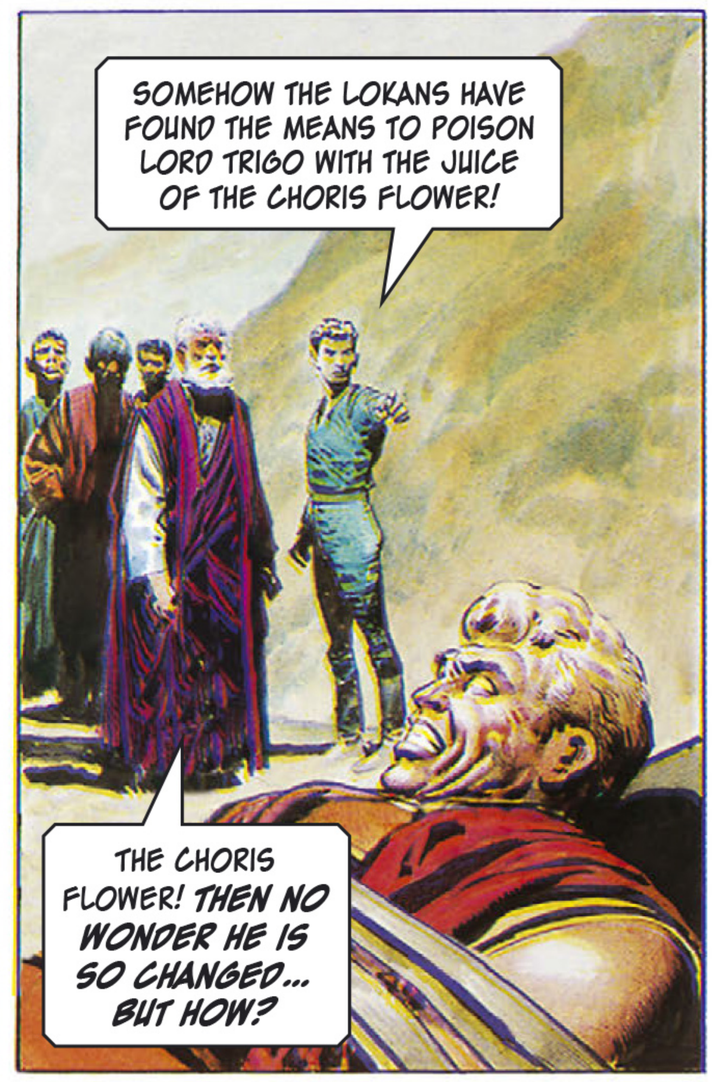
THE SUNS OF ELEKTON WERE HIGH IN THE ZENITH WHEN THE TRIGANS DRAGGED THEIR FORMER LEADER TO THE CREST OF A JAGGED FANG OF ROCK OUTSIDE THE CITY...

...AND THERE THEY BOUND HIM TO THE MASSIVE CATAPULT THAT WAS TO THROW HIM INTO THE ABYSS BELOW...
FREE ME, I COMMAND YOU! I AM TRIGO, THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH OVER THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

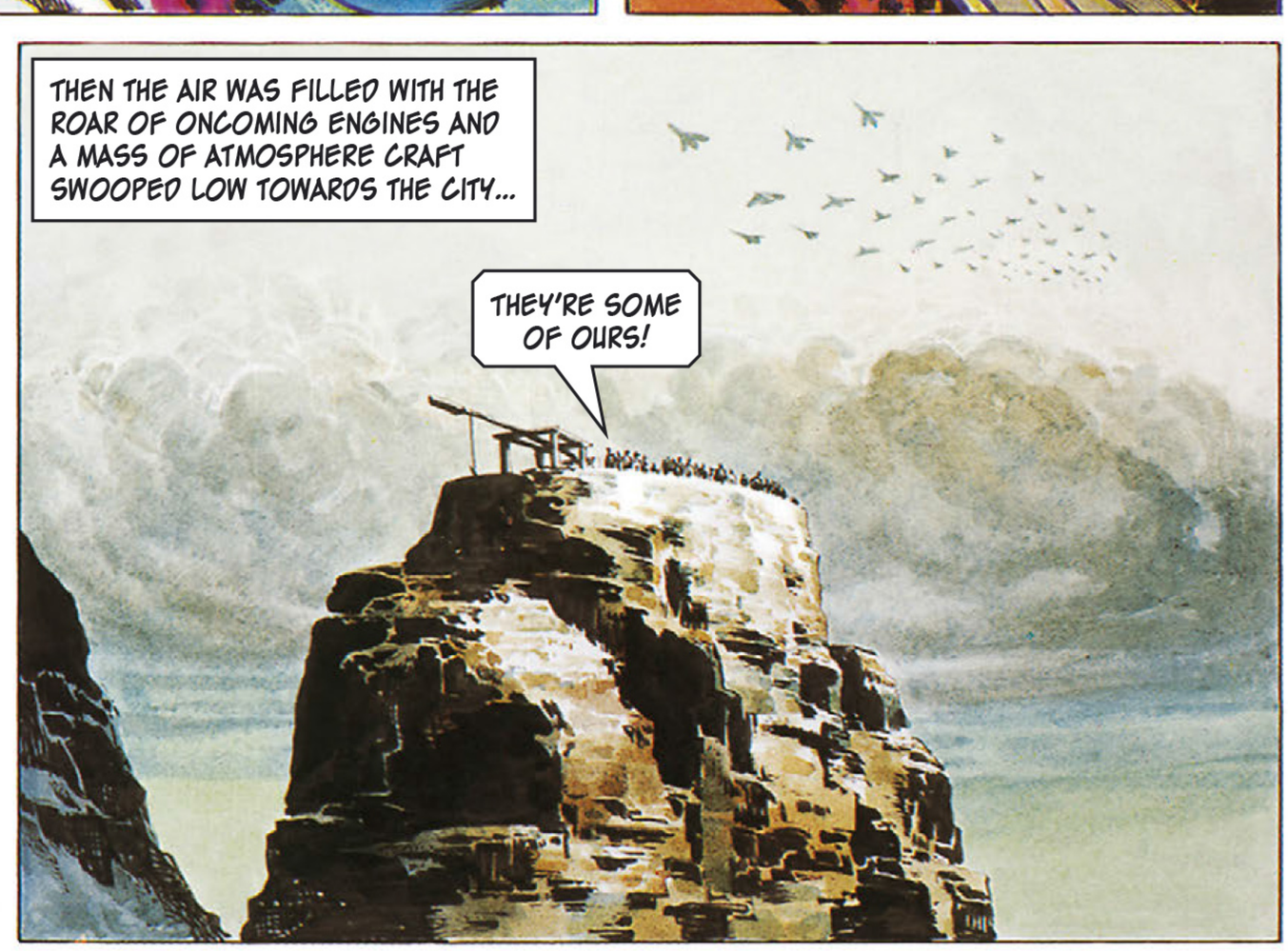
THE ORDER WAS GIVEN... THE BLADE WAS RAISED ON HIGH, FLASHING IN THE SUNLIGHT...
NOW!

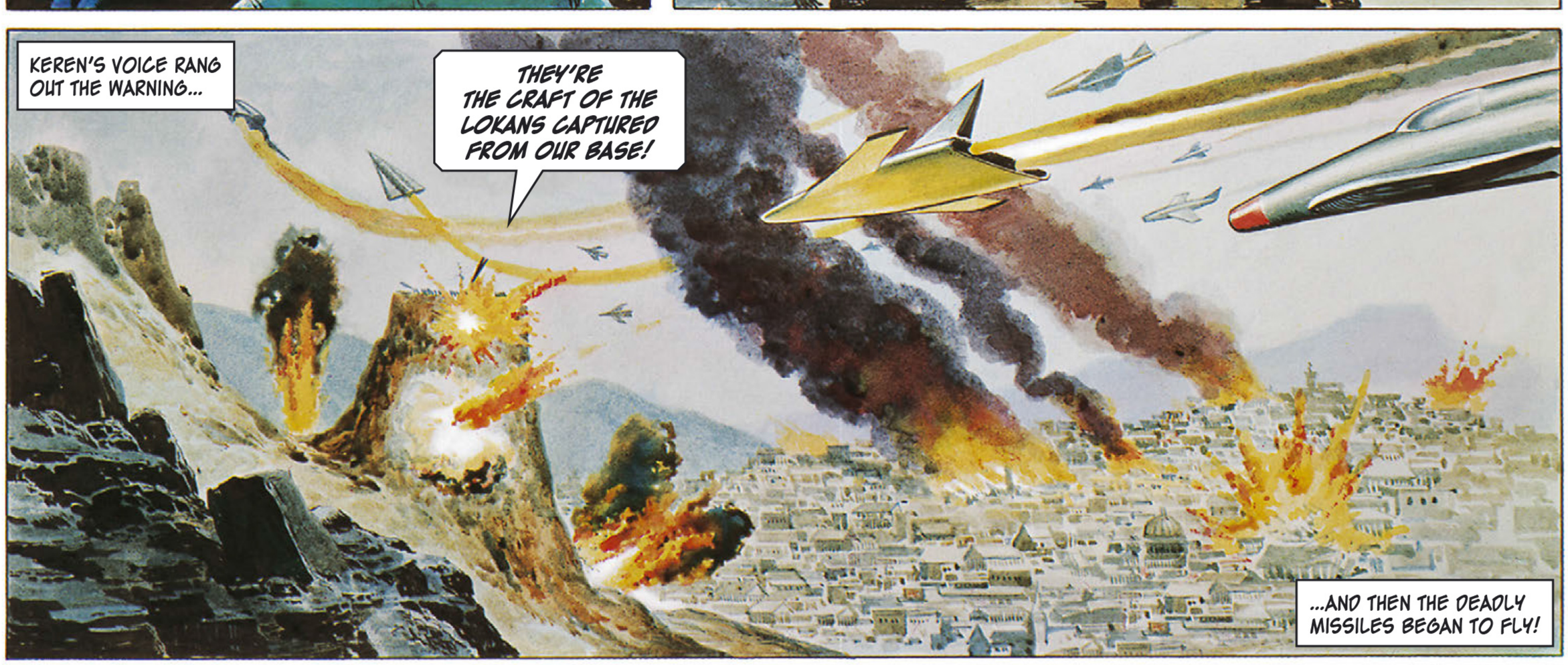
...WHEN KEREN'S VOICE RANG OUT FROM THE SKY!
STOP!

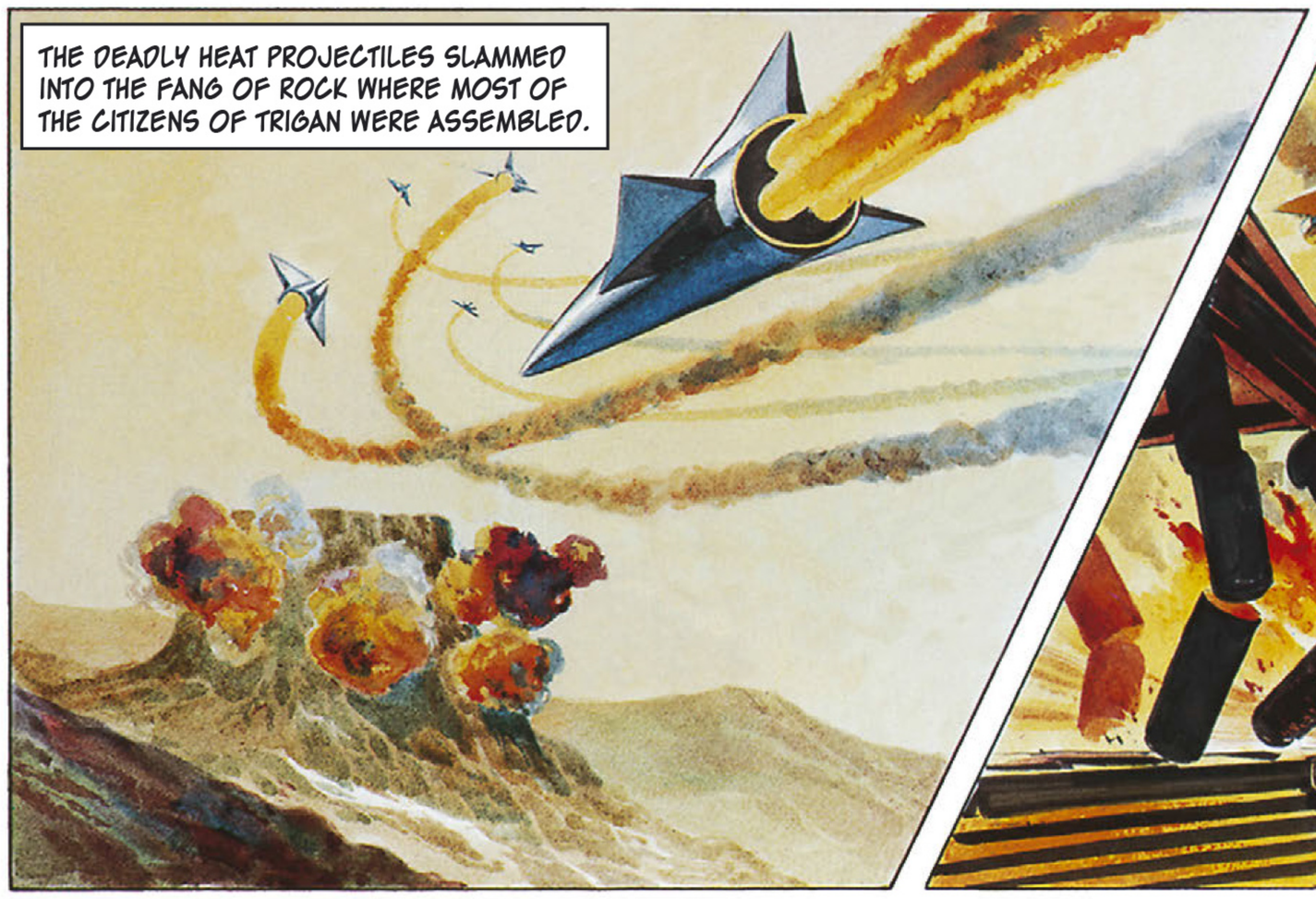
BREATHLESSLY, KEREN TOLD THEM THE TERRIBLE NEWS.
KEREN... WE THOUGHT YOU WERE NO MORE!
THE LOKANS HAVE RISEN. THEY HAVE CAPTURED THE BASE AT LOKA CITY... AND THAT ISN'T ALL!


SOMEHOW THE LOKANS HAVE FOUND THE MEANS TO POISON LORD TRIGO WITH THE JUICE OF THE CHORIS FLOWER!
THE CHORIS FLOWER! THEN NO WONDER HE IS SO CHANGED... BUT HOW?

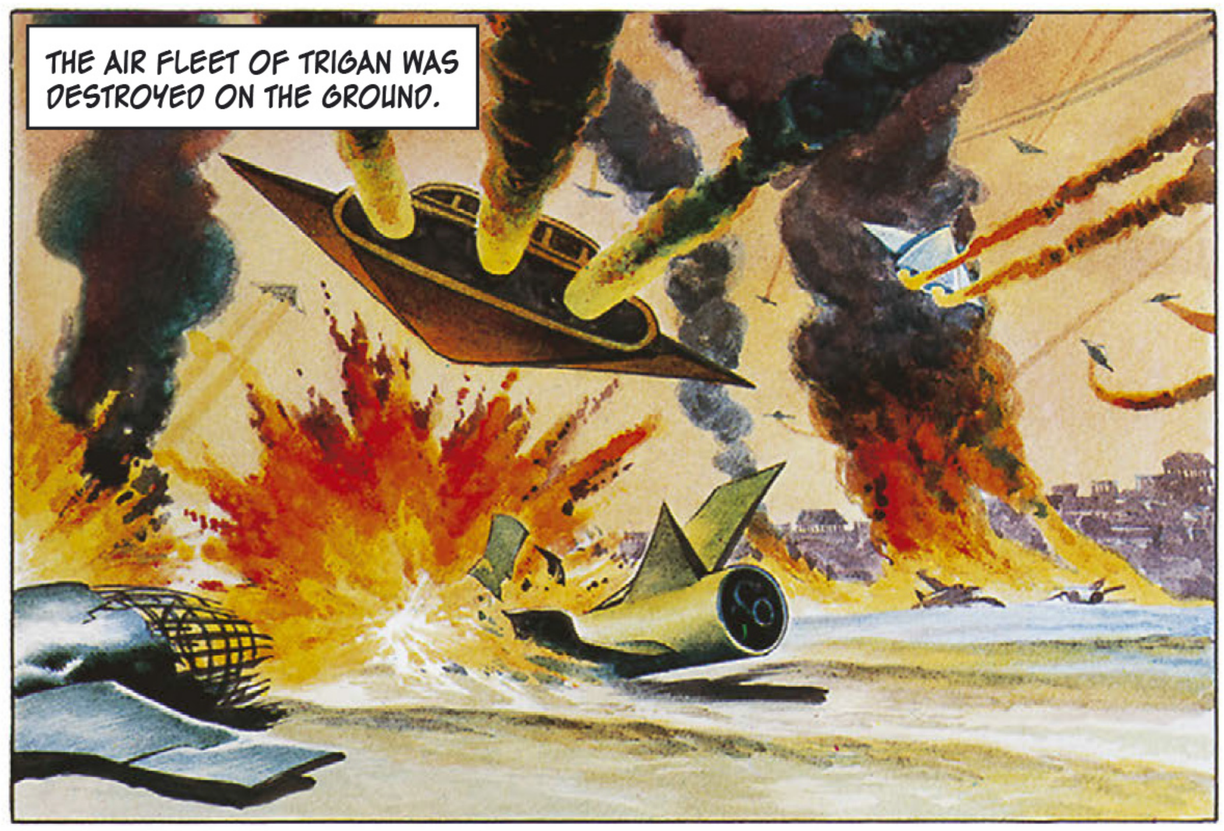
PERIC'S DAUGHTER, SALVIA, WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE THE ANSWER TO THE MYSTERY.
THE LOKAN GIRL! THE GIRL WHO SELLS SWEETMEATS IN THE MARKET PLACE... SHE HAS BEEN SUPPLYING TRIGO WITH HIS FAVOURITE SWEETMEAT, RIGHT UP TILL THIS MORNING!
THE CUNNING OF IT... THE FIENDISH CUNNING OF IT!

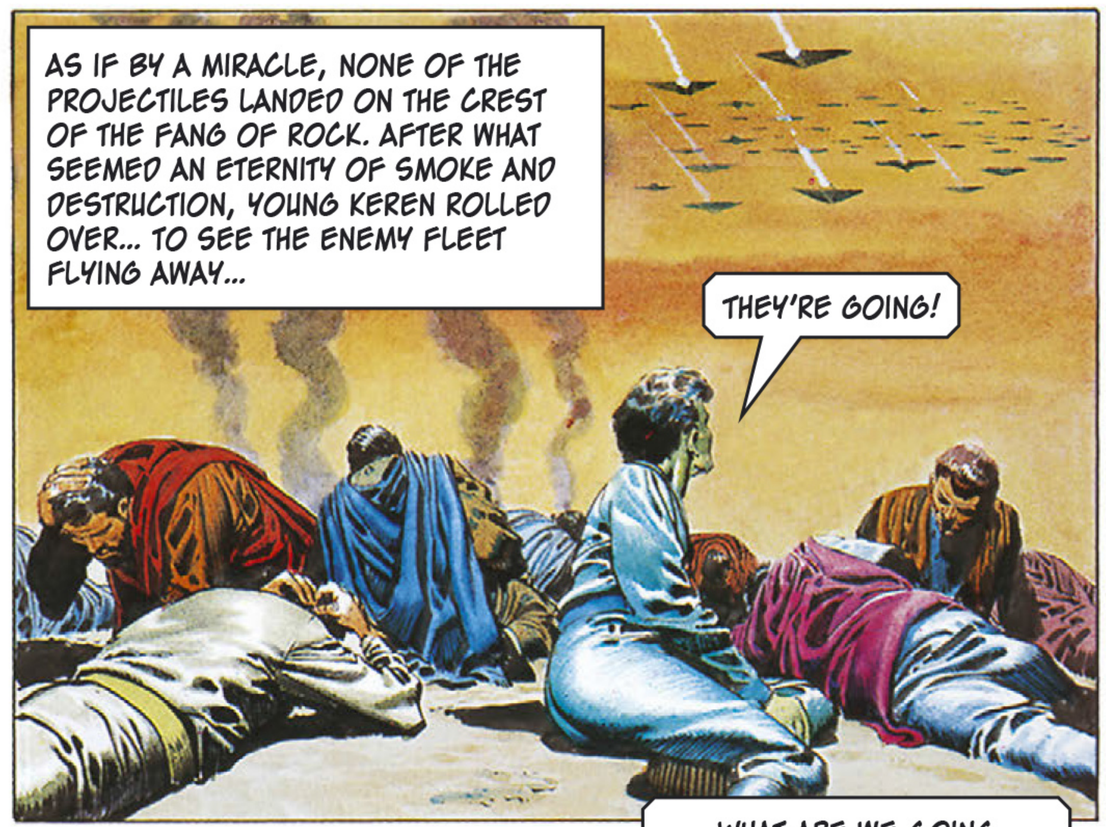

THEN THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE ROAR OF ONCOMING ENGINES AND A MASS OF ATMOSPHERE CRAFT SWOOPED LOW TOWARDS THE CITY...
THEY'RE SOME OF OURS!


KEREN'S VOICE RANG OUT THE WARNING...
THEY'RE THE CRAFT OF THE LOKANS CAPTURED FROM OUR BASE!
...AND THEN THE DEADLY MISSILES BEGAN TO FLY!


THE DEADLY HEAT PROJECTILES SLAMMED INTO THE FANG OF ROCK WHERE MOST OF THE CITIZENS OF TRIGAN WERE ASSEMBLED.

SWOOPING LOW OVER THE CITY, THE LOKANS CAUSED GREAT DEVASTATION.

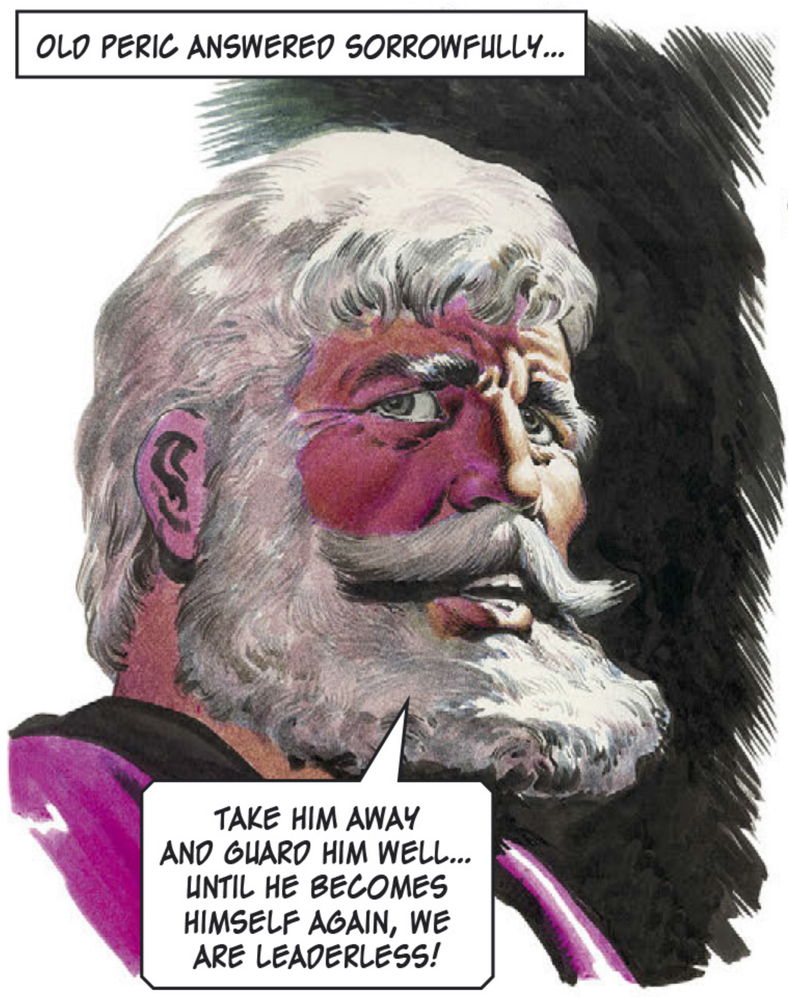

THE AIR FLEET OF TRIGAN WAS DESTROYED ON THE GROUND.


AS IF BY A MIRACLE, NONE OF THE PROJECTILES LANDED ON THE CREST OF THE FANG OF ROCK. AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN ETERNITY OF SMOKE AND DESTRUCTION, YOUNG KEREN ROLLED OVER... TO SEE THE ENEMY FLEET FLYING AWAY...
THEY'RE GOING!

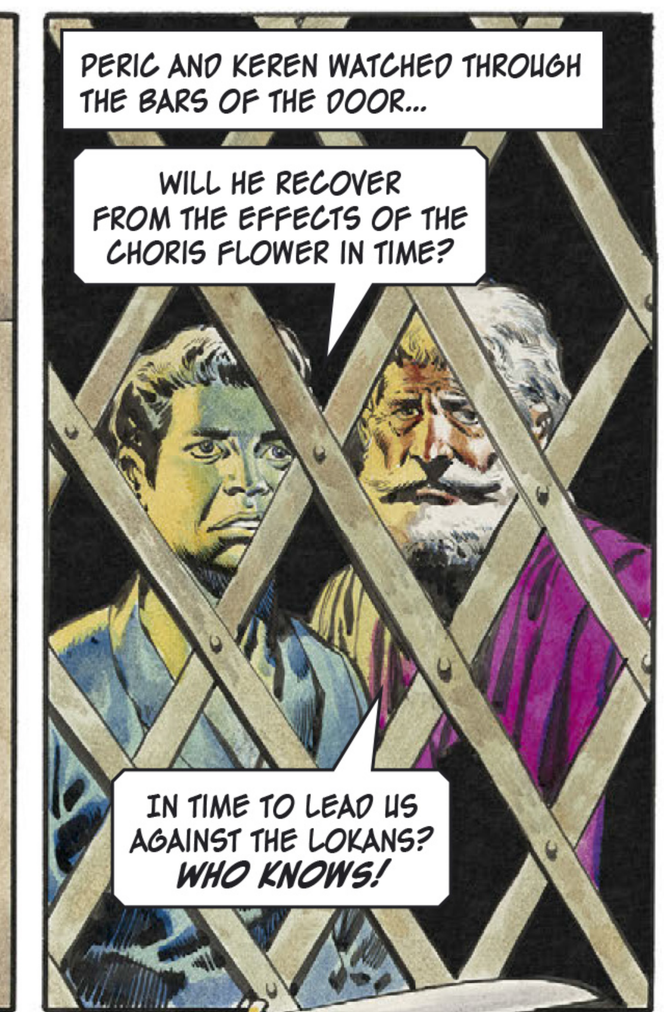
THEY'RE RETURNING TO LOKA FOR MORE AMMUNITION... BUT THEY'LL BE BACK!
AND THAT WILL BE THE END OF ALL OF US!

THEN TRIGO'S VOICE WAS RAISED IN SAVAGE MIRTH...
HA! FATE WILL REPAY YOU FOR TRYING TO DESTROY TRIGO THE MIGHTY! WHEN THE SUNS GO DOWN TONIGHT, THERE'LL BE NOTHING LEFT OF TRIGAN... OR ANY OF YOU!

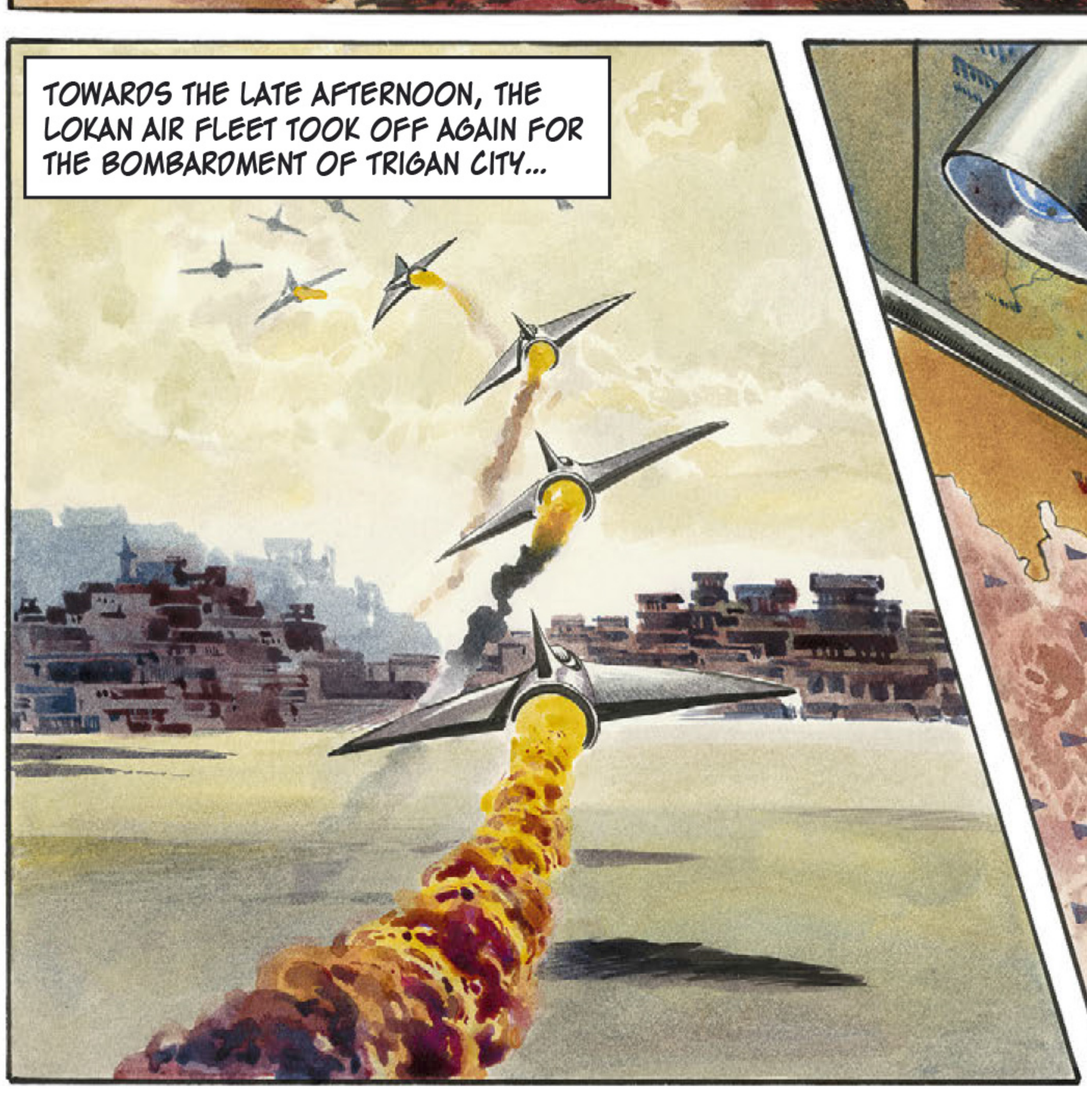
THEY STARED IN ANGUISH AT THE MAN WHO HAD ONCE BEEN THEIR BELOVED LEADER.
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH LORD TRIGO? FREEING HIM WOULD BE LIKE RELEASING A WILD BEAST!
I SHALL BE AVENGED! THE LOKANS ARE NO FOOLS... THEY'LL TRAMPLE THE TRIGAN EMPIRE TO DUST! THE PEOPLE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WILL FORGET THAT IT EVER EXISTED!


OLD PERIC ANSWERED SORROWFULLY...
TAKE HIM AWAY AND GUARD HIM WELL... UNTIL HE BECOMES HIMSELF AGAIN, WE ARE LEADERLESS!

AND SO THEY LOCKED TRIGO IN A CELL. THERE HIS POISONED MIND GAVE WAY TO WILD THOUGHTS OF TRIUMPH AND DESTRUCTION...
DESTRUCTION TO TRIGAN!


PERIC AND KEREN WATCHED THROUGH THE BARS OF THE DOOR...
WILL HE RECOVER FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE CHORIS FLOWER IN TIME?
IN TIME TO LEAD US AGAINST THE LOKANS? WHO KNOWS!

MEANWHILE, THE TRIUMPHANT LOKAN REBELS WERE SWEEPING OVER THE BORDER INTO THE LAND OF TRIGAN. AT THEIR HEAD RODE KALEK, THE MAN WHO HAD PLANNED THE WHOLE TREACHEROUS CAMPAIGN.

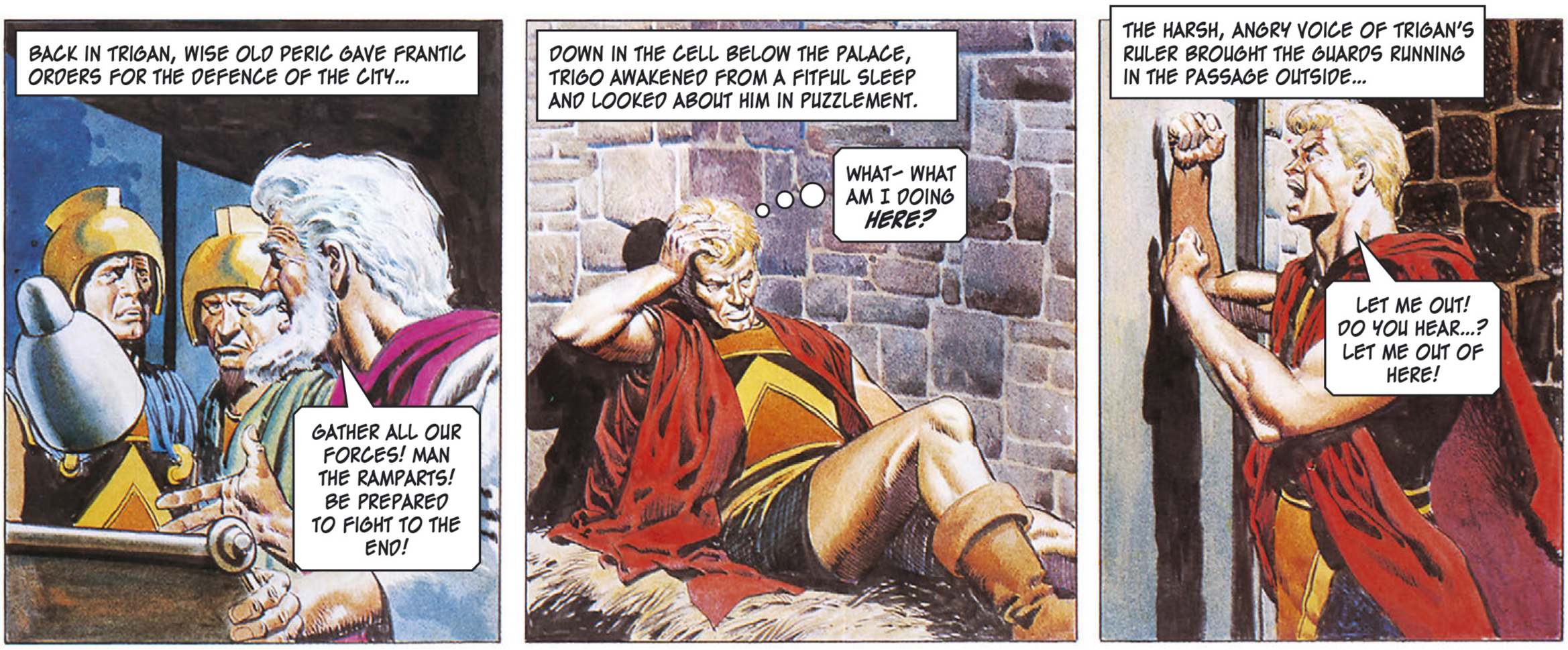

TOWARDS THE LATE AFTERNOON, THE LOKAN AIR FLEET TOOK OFF AGAIN FOR THE BOMBARDMENT OF TRIGAN CITY...

AND IN TRIGAN, OLD PERIC SCANNED THE ANXIOUS FACES OF THE CHIEF OFFICERS... AND DESPAIRED!
DO NOT LOOK TO ME FOR LEADERSHIP... ONLY ONE MAN CAN SAVE THE TRIGAN EMPIRE... AND AT THIS MOMENT HE IS REJOICING IN THE THOUGHT OF ITS IMMINENT DESTRUCTION!

SOON – RELOADED WITH MORE AMMUNITION – THE LOKANS WERE RETURNING IN THE CAPTURED AIR FLEET TO CONTINUE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY OF TRIGAN...

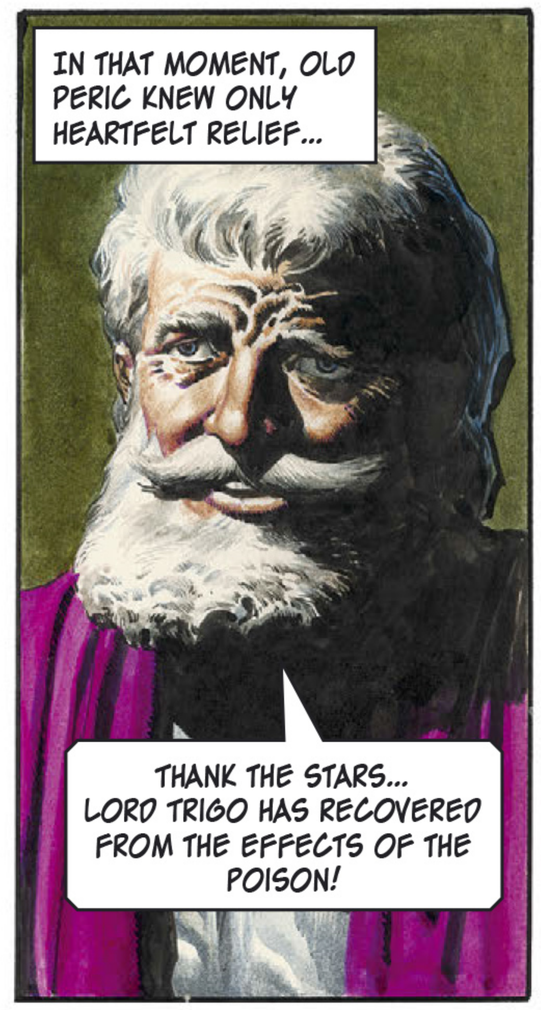
...WHILE THE LOKAN GROUND FORCES UNDER THEIR LEADER KALEK LAID WASTE THE COUNTRYSIDE ON THEIR TRIUMPHANT ADVANCE UPON THE CITY...

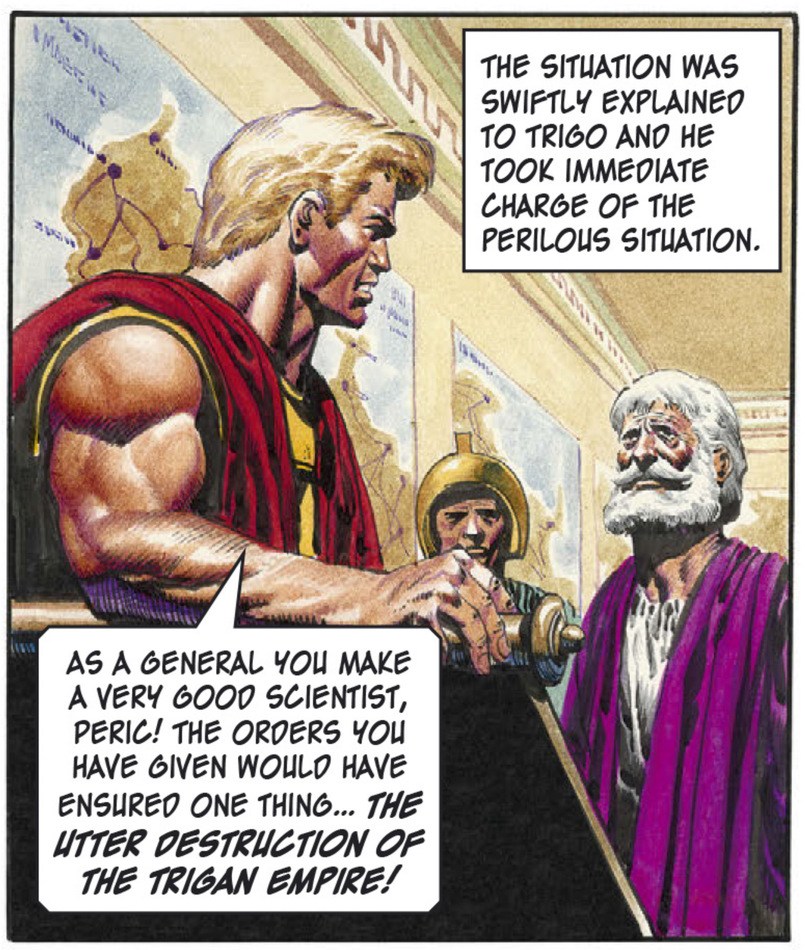
DESTRUCTION TO TRIGAN!



THE GUARDS HASTENED TO OBEY... AND WERE ROUGHLY THRUST ASIDE BY THEIR RULER.
LORD TRIGO... YOU ARE TO REMAIN HERE... BY ORDERS OF PERIC.
PERIC? HOW LONG HAS THAT OLD FOOL BEEN GIVING ORDER IN MY EMPIRE?

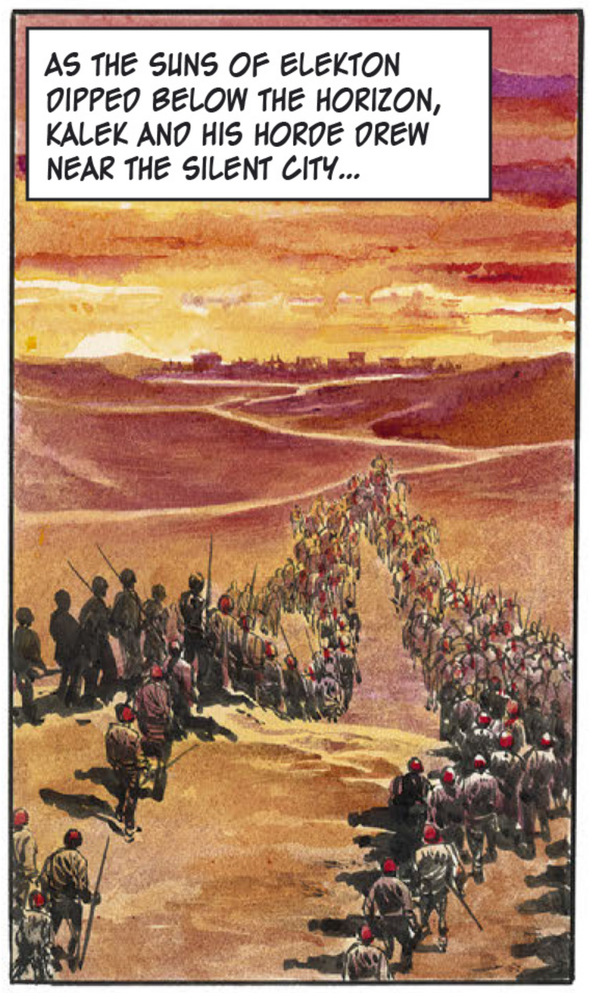
PERIC AND THE CAPTAINS TURNED IN AMAZEMENT AS HE BURST INTO THE COMMAND ROOM AND LASHED THEM ALL WITH HIS FURIOUS GAZE.
NOW... BY ALL THE DEMONS OF DAVELI, WILL SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT MADNESS IS GOING ON HERE? HAVE YOU ALL TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES?


IN THAT MOMENT, OLD PERIC KNEW ONLY HEARTFELT RELIEF...
THANK THE STARS... LORD TRIGO HAS RECOVERED FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE POISON!


THE SITUATION WAS SWIFTLY EXPLAINED TO TRIGO AND HE TOOK IMMEDIATE CHARGE OF THE PERILOUS SITUATION.
AS A GENERAL YOU MAKE A VERY GOOD SCIENTIST, PERIC! THE ORDERS YOU HAVE GIVEN WOULD HAVE ENSURED ONE THING... THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

WE HAVE NO AIR FLEET AND NOT ENOUGH MEN TO DEFEND THE RAMPARTS. VERY WELL... HERE IS WHAT WE WILL DO. LISTEN...

AN HOUR LATER, THE LOKAN AIR FLEET CIRCLED THE DEFENCELESS CITY AND ADDED TO THE TERRIBLE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR FIRST RAID...


AS THE SUNS OF ELEKTON DIPPED BELOW THE HORIZON, KALEK AND HIS HORDE DREW NEAR THE SILENT CITY...

THE AIR FLEET HAS DONE ITS WORK WELL... FORWARD!
SEE, KALEK... THE GATES OF THE CITY ARE OPEN... AND THERE IS NOT A SINGLE TRIGAN GUARDING THE RAMPARTS!

AND SO THE LOKAN HORDE RODE – UNOPPOSED – INTO THE CITY OF TRIGAN...
TRIGAN IS OURS!

AT THE HEAD OF HIS JUBILANT FOLLOWERS, KALEK THE LOKAN DREW REIN IN THE CITY SQUARE OF TRIGAN AND LOOKED ABOUT HIM AT THE SCENE OF DESOLATION.
NOT A TRIGAN TO BE SEEN!
THEY MUST ALL HAVE PERISHED DURING THE AERIAL BOMBARDMENT! SO MUCH THE BETTER... TRIGAN IS OURS, MY WARRIORS!

A GRIN OF TRIUMPH SPREAD OVER KALEK'S FACE.
TELL THE WARRIORS TO LOOT ALL THEY NEED. FOR MY PART, I SHALL SLEEP HERE. CALL ME EARLY... AT THE FIRST LIGHT OF DAWN WE WILL DESTROY THE CITY COMPLETELY, SO THAT MEN WILL NEVER KNOW THAT THE TRIGAN EMPIRE EVER EXISTED!

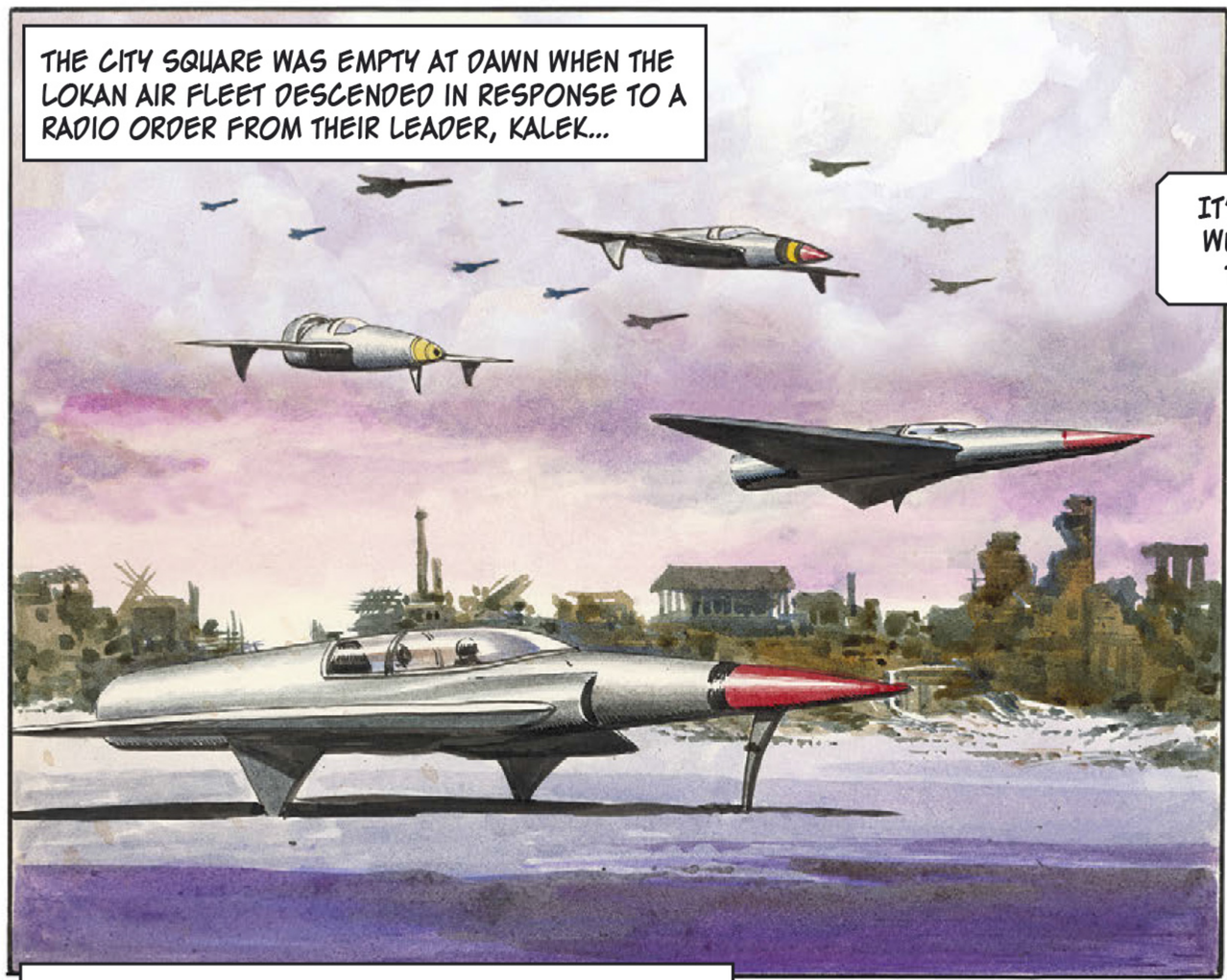
KALEK SWAGGERED INTO THE RUINED PALACE AND THREW HIMSELF INTO TRIGO'S SPLENDID THRONE.

WEARIED AFTER HIS LONG, TRIUMPHANT RIDE FROM LOKA, KALEK SLEPT WHERE HE SAT...
BUT, TOWARDS THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING... IT HAPPENED!

AT THE SAME MOMENT, SHADOWY FIGURES MOVED AMONGST THE LOKAN WARRIORS WHO SLEPT UNDER THE STARS IN THE CITY SQUARE...

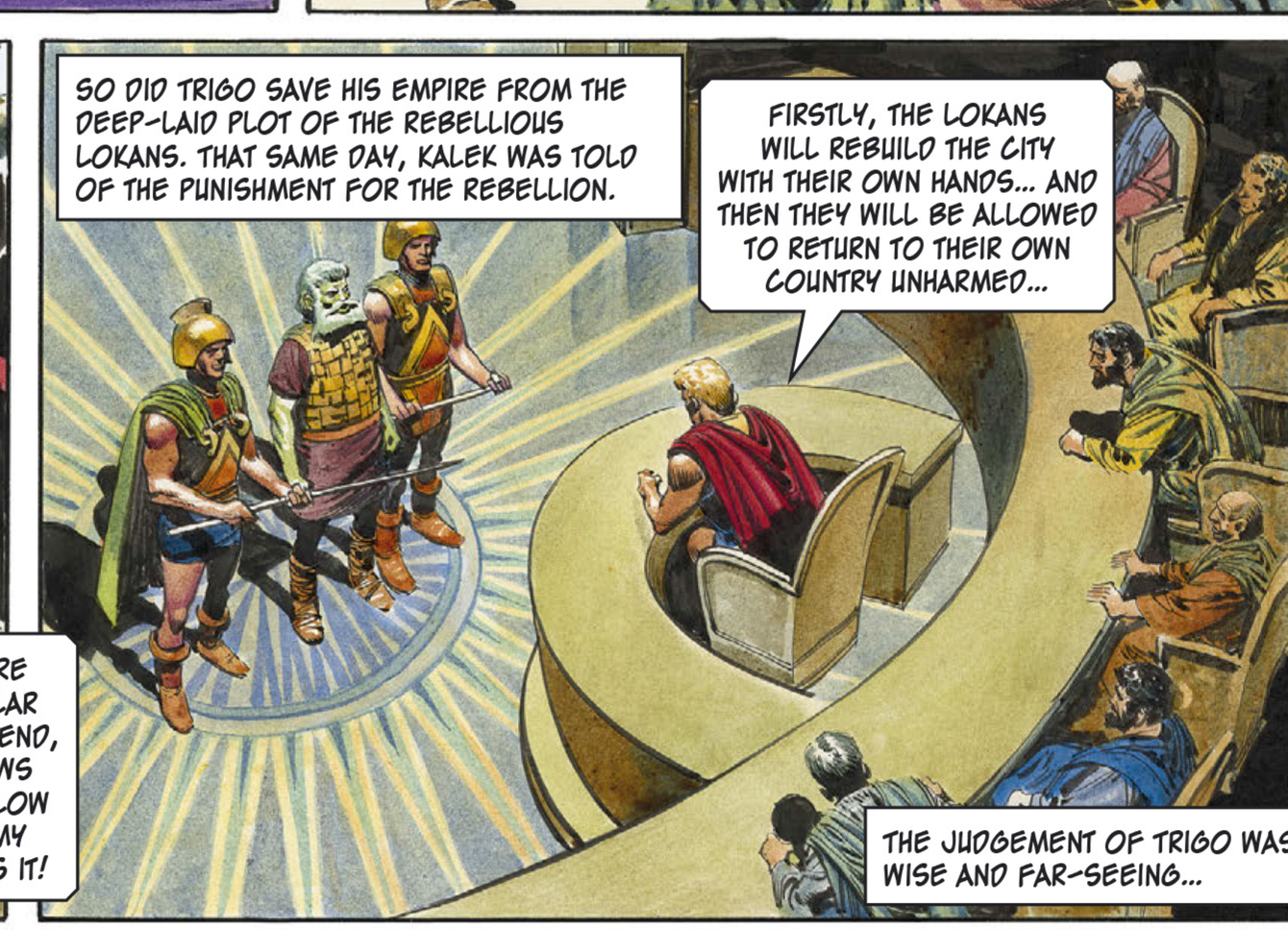
A FEW SENTRIES HAD BEEN POSTED. THEY NEVER KNEW WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM!

MEANWHILE, KALEK WAS STARING IN TERROR AT THE POINT OF TRIGO'S SWORD THAT HOVERED AN INCH FROM HIS CHEST.
LORD TRIGO... BUT... BUT...
I WAS DEPRIVED OF THE CHORIS FLOWER AND I AM MYSELF AGAIN... AND MY PEOPLE HID IN THE UNDERGROUND VAULTS DURING THE BOMBARDMENT. YOU HAVE FAILED... AND NOW YOU WILL SEND A RADIO MESSAGE TO THE AIR FLEET...


THE CITY SQUARE WAS EMPTY AT DAWN WHEN THE LOKAN AIR FLEET DESCENDED IN RESPONSE TO A RADIO ORDER FROM THEIR LEADER, KALEK...

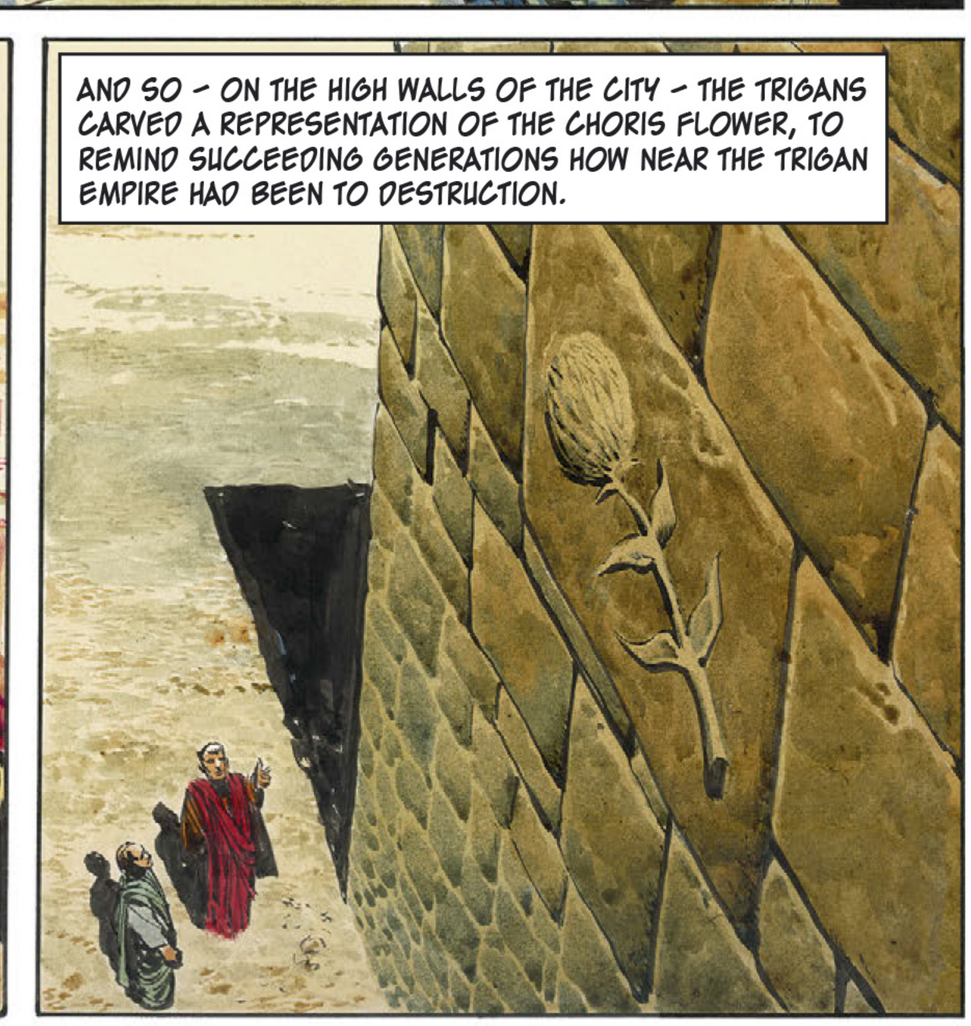
NO SOONER DID THE AIR CREWS ALIGHT FROM THEIR ATMOSPHERE CRAFT THAN THEY WERE SURROUNDED BY ARMED TRIGANS AND TAKEN PRISONERS!
IT'S A TRAP... WE'VE BEEN TRICKED!
HANDS ON HEADS, OR IT WILL BE THE WORSE FOR YOU!

DURING THE NIGHT, TRIGO AND HIS WARRIORS HAD OVERPOWERED THE UNSUSPECTING LOKANS AND THE CITY WAS FREED. OLD PERIC LOOKED AT THE RULER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE IN WIDE-EYED ADMIRATION.
NO ONE BUT YOU COULD HAVE DONE IT, LORD TRIGO!
REMEMBER... IF YOU ARE EVER PLACED IN A SIMILAR POSITION AGAIN, OLD FRIEND, A GOOD GENERAL KNOWS WHEN IT IS WISE TO LIE LOW – AND STRIKE HIS ENEMY WHEN HE LEAST EXPECTS IT!


SO DID TRIGO SAVE HIS EMPIRE FROM THE DEEP-LAID PLOT OF THE REBELLIOUS LOKANS. THAT SAME DAY, KALEK WAS TOLD OF THE PUNISHMENT FOR THE REBELLION.
FIRSTLY, THE LOKANS WILL REBUILD THE CITY WITH THEIR OWN HANDS... AND THEN THEY WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY UNHARMED...
THE JUDGEMENT OF TRIGO WAS WISE AND FAR-SEEING...

IT IS MY INTENTION THAT THE TRIGANS AND THE LOKANS LIVE IN PEACE. TO THIS END, I SHALL ORDER THAT THE LOKANS BE TREATED WITH MORE CONSIDERATION IN THE FUTURE SO THAT THEY WILL HAVE NO CAUSE TO REBEL AGAIN.
LORD TRIGO IS AS MERCIFUL AS HE IS MIGHTY.

FAITHFUL BRAG WAS FREED FROM THE MINES, WHERE HE HAD BEEN SENT WHEN HIS BROTHER WAS SUFFERING FROM THE INFLUENCE OF THE POISONOUS CHORIS FLOWER. RUEFULLY, HE WATCHED TRIGO GAZING THOUGHTFULLY AT A SPRIG OF THE FATEFUL FLOWER...
THAT INNOCENT-LOOKING FLOWER NEARLY SPELT THE END OF US ALL, BROTHER!
INDEED IT DID... AND WE MUST NEVER FORGET!


AND SO – ON THE HIGH WALLS OF THE CITY – THE TRIGANS CARVED A REPRESENTATION OF THE CHORIS FLOWER, TO REMIND SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS HOW NEAR THE TRIGAN EMPIRE HAD BEEN TO DESTRUCTION.

VII

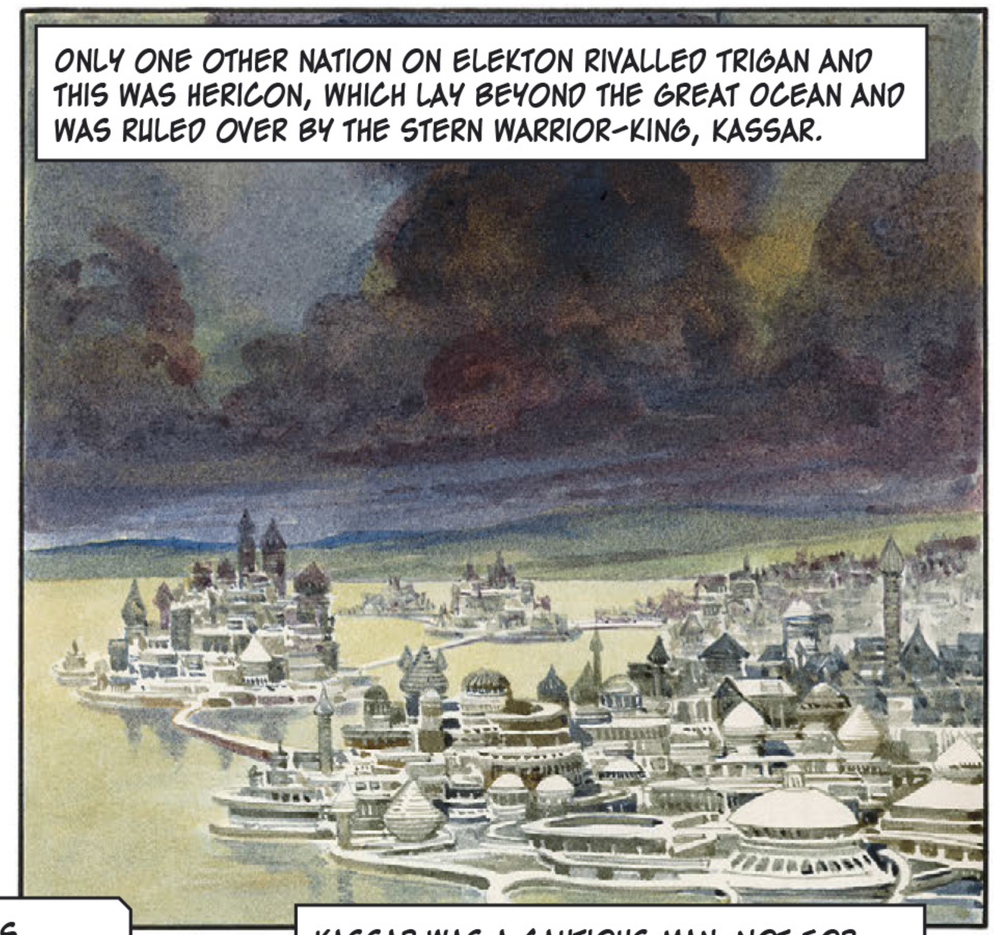
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

WAR WITH HERICON

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 256 – 264

10th December 1966 – 4th February 1967

UNDER THE RULE OF HER LEADER TRIGO, THE TRIGAN EMPIRE GREW FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH AND HER AIR FLEETS INCREASED IN NUMBER.

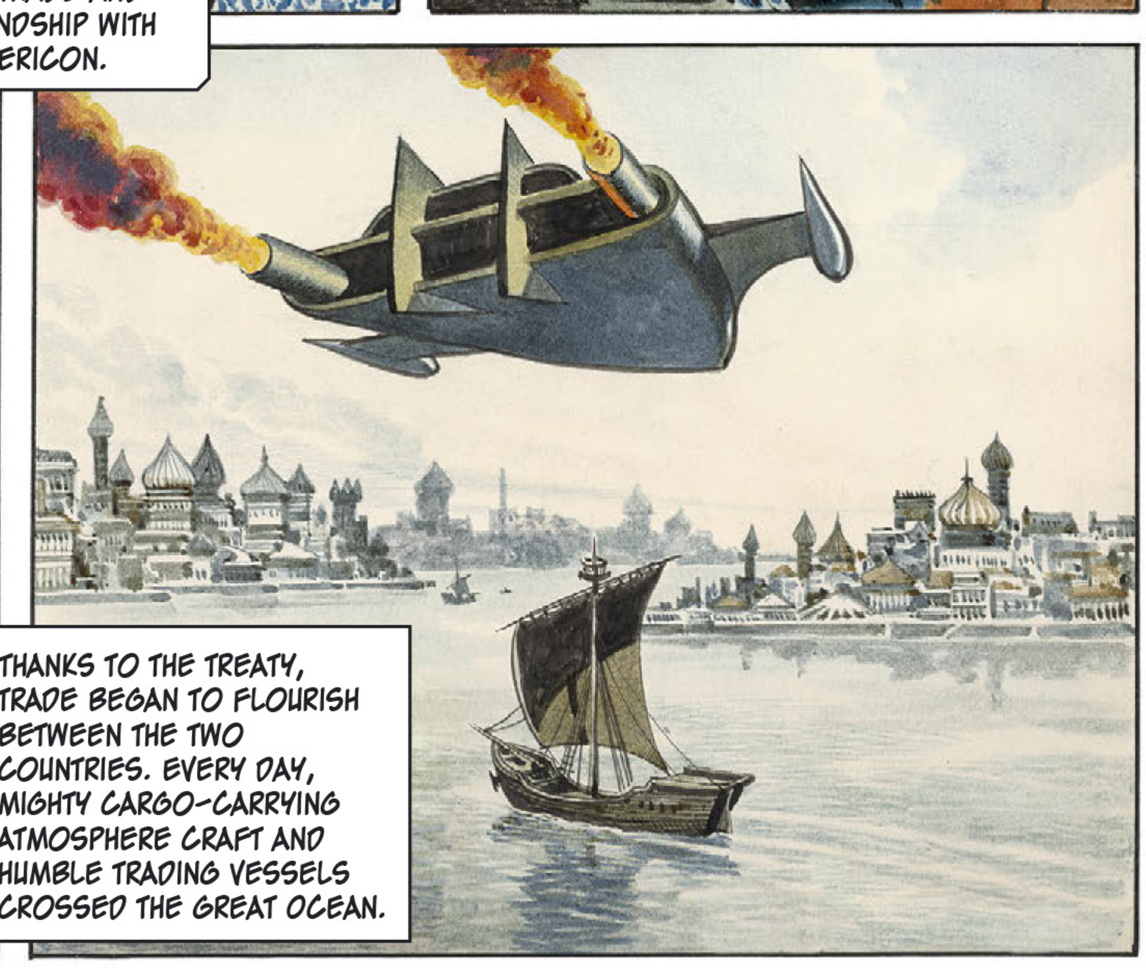

ONLY ONE OTHER NATION ON ELEKTON RIVALLED TRIGAN AND THIS WAS HERICON, WHICH LAY BEYOND THE GREAT OCEAN AND WAS RULED OVER BY THE STERN WARRIOR-KING, KASSAR.

ONE DAY, ENVOYS FROM TRIGAN ARRIVED AT THE COURT OF KING KASSAR.
SO... YOU BRING A MESSAGE FROM LORD TRIGO?
YES, MAJESTY.

THE TRIGANS HAVE COME FAR... A FEW YEARS AGO THEY WERE BARBARIANS DRESSED IN SKINS...
AND NOW IT IS LORD TRIGO'S WISH TO MAKE A TREATY OF TRADE AND FRIENDSHIP WITH HERICON.

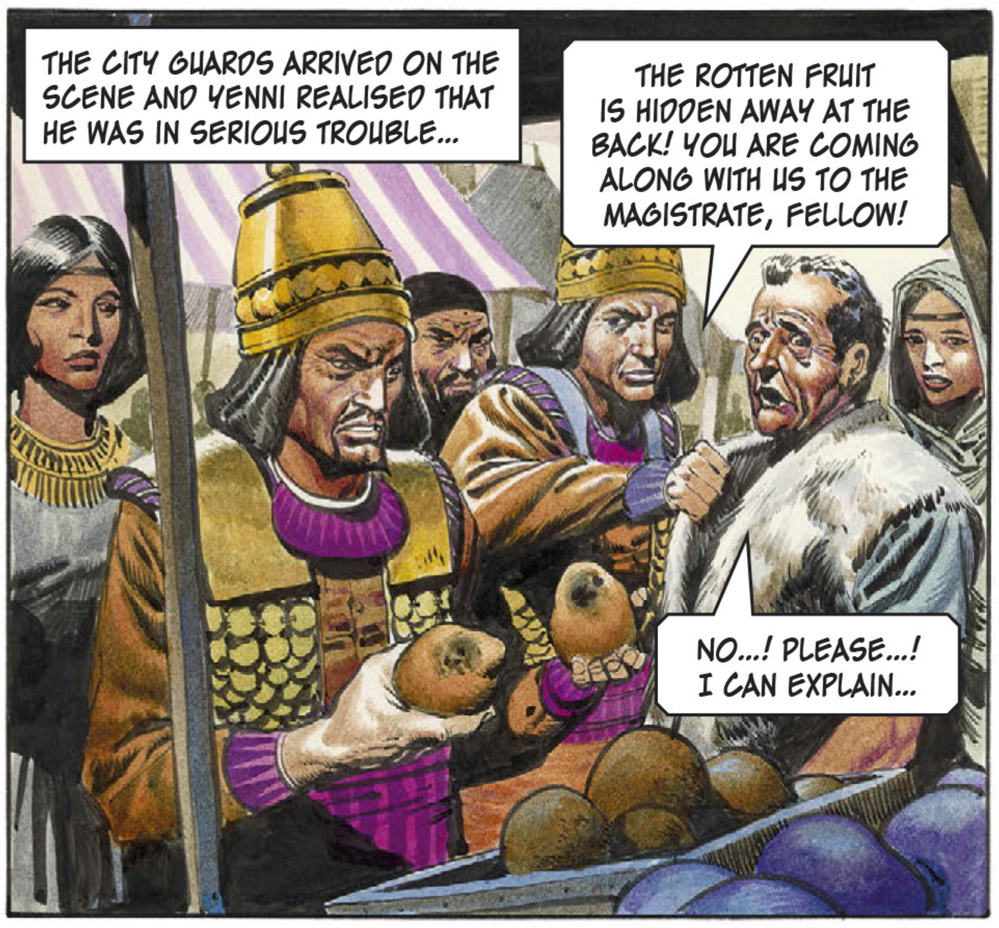
KASSAR WAS A CAUTIOUS MAN. NOT FOR MANY MONTHS WAS THE TREATY COMPLETED AND SIGNED WITH GREAT CEREMONY...
MY SISTER, THE LADY URSA, WILL ACCOMPANY YOU BACK TO TRIGAN AND GIVE MY GREETINGS TO LORD TRIGO.
LORD TRIGO WILL BE GREATLY HONOURED, MAJESTY.

AND SO THE LADY URSA TRAVELLED TO TRIGAN, BUT IT WAS MANY YEARS BEFORE SHE SAW HER OWN COUNTRY AGAIN FOR, SIX MONTHS LATER, SHE AND TRIGO WERE MARRIED.


THANKS TO THE TREATY, TRADE BEGAN TO FLOURISH BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. EVERY DAY, MIGHTY CARGO-CARRYING ATMOSPHERE CRAFT AND HUMBLE TRADING VESSELS CROSSED THE GREAT OCEAN.

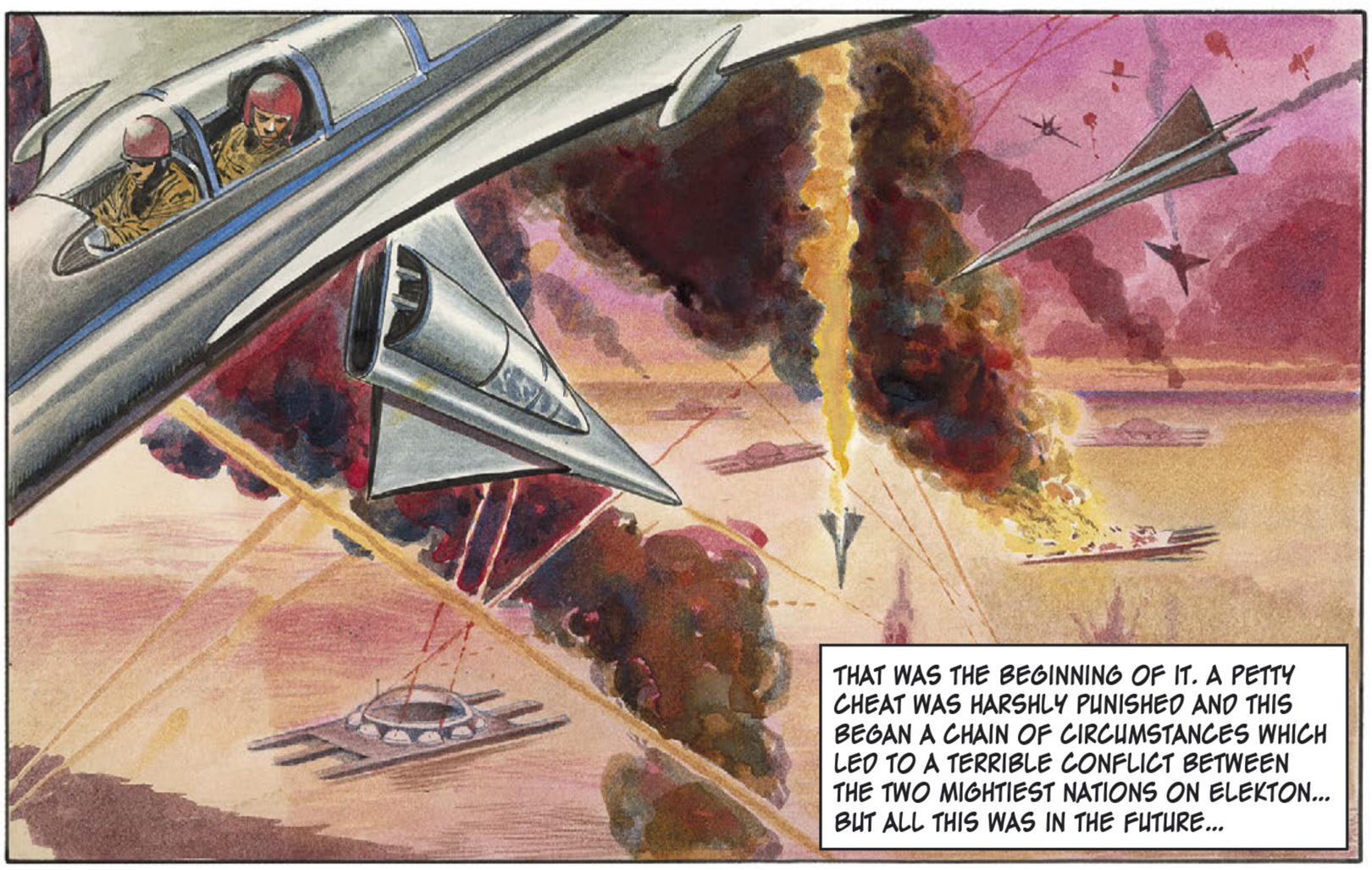
AMONGST THE SMALL TRADERS FROM TRIGAN WAS A CUNNING-EYED RASCAL NAMED YENNI WHO HAD HIS OWN IDEAS ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF HERICON.
I TELL YOU THEY'RE A PACK OF GULLIBLE FOOLS AND THEY'LL BUY ANYTHING! MARK MY WORDS, I'LL BE A RICH MAN BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR!

BUT IN THE MARKET PLACE OF HERICON CITY, YENNI DISCOVERED THAT HIS CUSTOMERS WERE NOT THE FOOLS HE HAD RECKONED THEM TO BE!
THE FRUIT YOU SOLD ME IS ROTTEN! GIVE ME BACK MY MONEY!
WHAT'S THIS? ARE YOU ACCUSING ME OF BEING A CHEAT?


THE CITY GUARDS ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AND YENNI REALISED THAT HE WAS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE...
THE ROTTEN FRUIT IS HIDDEN AWAY AT THE BACK! YOU ARE COMING ALONG WITH US TO THE MAGISTRATE, FELLOW!
NO...! PLEASE...! I CAN EXPLAIN...

THE LAW OF KING KASSAR WAS HARSH... AS THE RASCALLY YENNI SOON DISCOVERED!
I SENTENCE YOU TO BE BRANDED ON THE BROW WITH THE MARK OF THE THIEF!
NO...! NO...!

HE RETURNED TO TRIGAN WITH THE MARK ON HIS BROW... AND A BURNING HATRED IN HIS HEART.
I'LL GET MY REVENGE... OH, YES, I'LL GET MY REVENGE!


THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF IT. A PETTY CHEAT WAS HARSHLY PUNISHED AND THIS BEGAN A CHAIN OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED TO A TERRIBLE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO MIGHTIEST NATIONS ON ELEKTON... BUT ALL THIS WAS IN THE FUTURE...

ON THE FIRST DAY OF EVERY NEW MOON, IT WAS TRIGO'S CUSTOM TO SEE ANY CITIZEN OF TRIGAN WHO HAD A GRIEVANCE. AND, ON THE FATEFUL DAY...
WHO IS NEXT?
YENNI, LORD TRIGO... A TRADER IN FRUIT... HE DEMANDS JUSTICE UNDER AN ANCIENT LAW!

TRIGO STARED HARD AT THE CUNNING FACE OF THE MAN BEFORE HIM...
YOU HAVE A GRIEVANCE, YENNI?
YES, LORD TRIGO... I DEMAND VENGEANCE UNDER OUR ANCIENT LAW!

YENNI POINTED TO THE LIVID BRAND ON HIS BROW... THE MARK OF A THIEF!
THE HERICONS DID THIS TO ME... I WAS UNJUSTLY CONDEMNED AS A THIEF. IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR ANCIENT LAW, I DEMAND THAT A CITIZEN OF HERICON RECEIVE THE SAME TREATMENT!

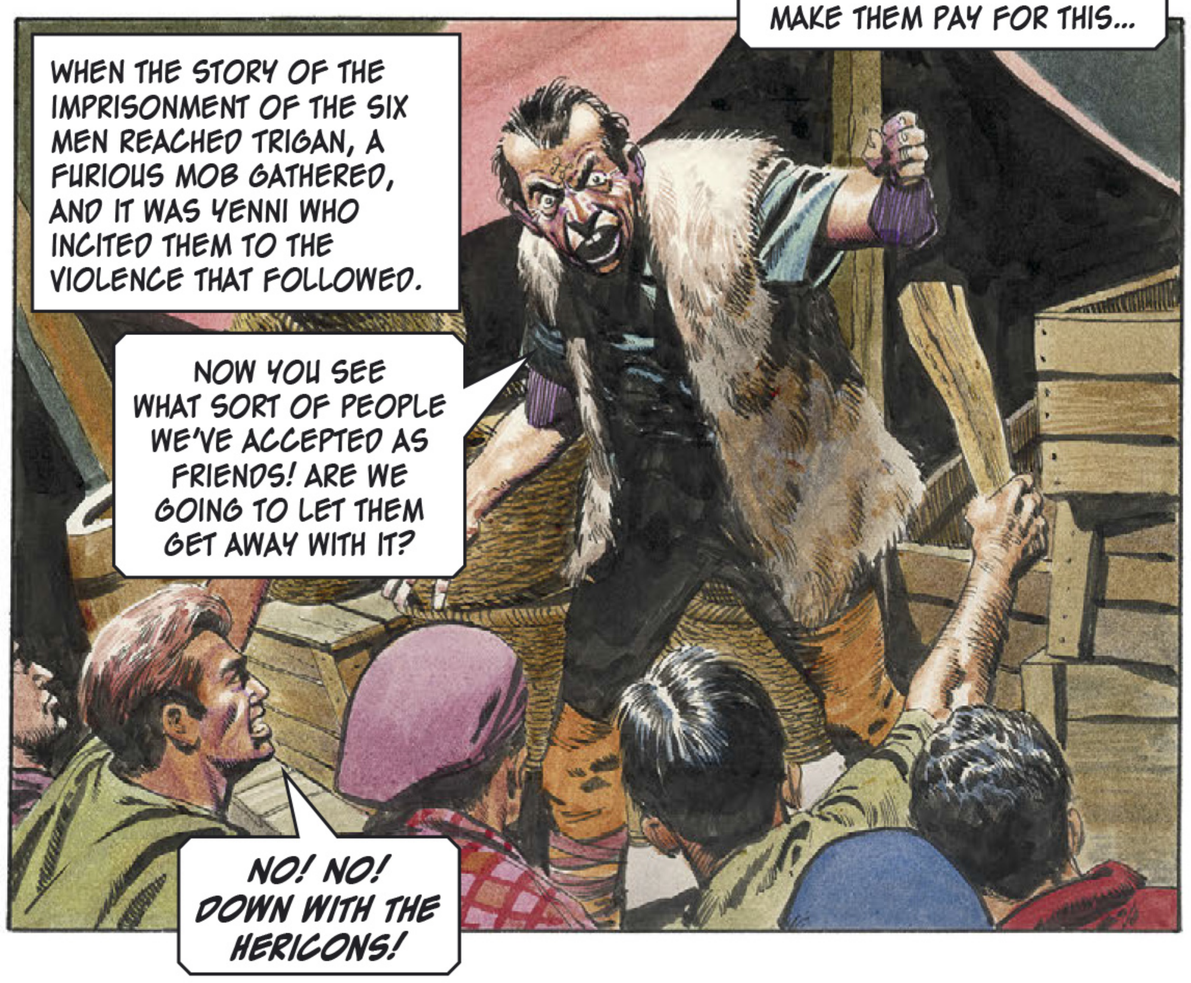
TRIGO GLANCED QUESTIONINGLY AT WISE OLD PERIC, WHO SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS.
THE OLD LAW OF VENGEANCE WAS MADE AT A TIME WHEN YOUR PEOPLE WERE IGNORANT BARBARIANS, LORD TRIGO. UNFORTUNATELY, IT HAS NEVER BEEN CHANGED.
THEN... THE LAW MUST TAKE ITS COURSE...

AND SO, A PARTY OF GUARDS WENT INTO THE MARKET PLACE WHERE THERE WERE MANY TRADERS FROM HERICON SELLING THEIR WARES...
HE'LL DO! SEIZE HIM!

THE INNOCENT TRADER WAS DRAGGED OFF, PROTESTING.
HEY! WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME? I'VE DONE NOTHING!

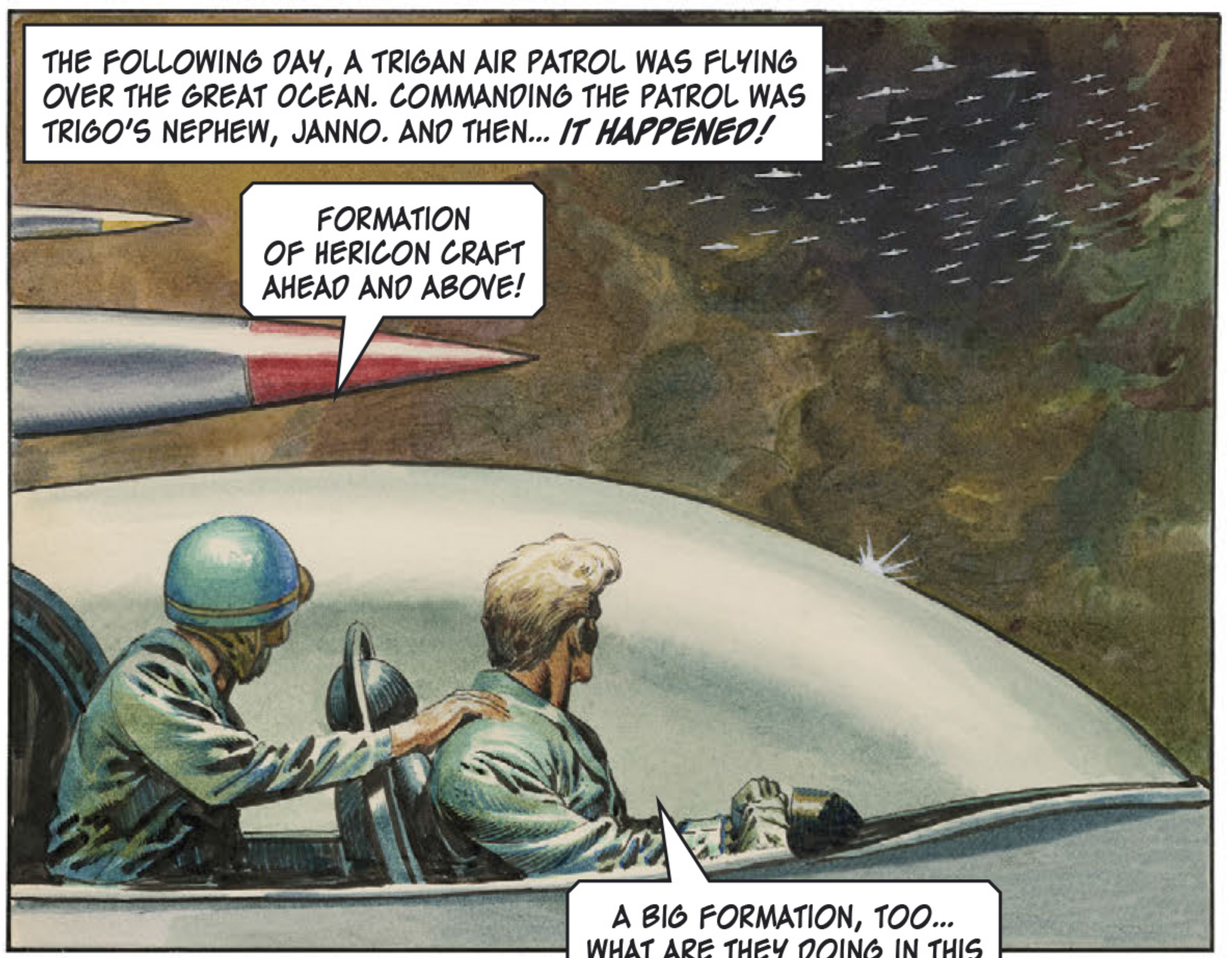
DAYS LATER, NEWS OF THE MAN'S FATE WAS BROUGHT TO KING KASSAR OF HERICON, WHOSE STERN FACE DARKENED IN FURY.
SO MUCH FOR THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE TRIGANS! THOSE BARBARIANS HAVE BRANDED AN INNOCENT CITIZEN OF HERICON! I'LL MAKE THEM PAY FOR THIS...

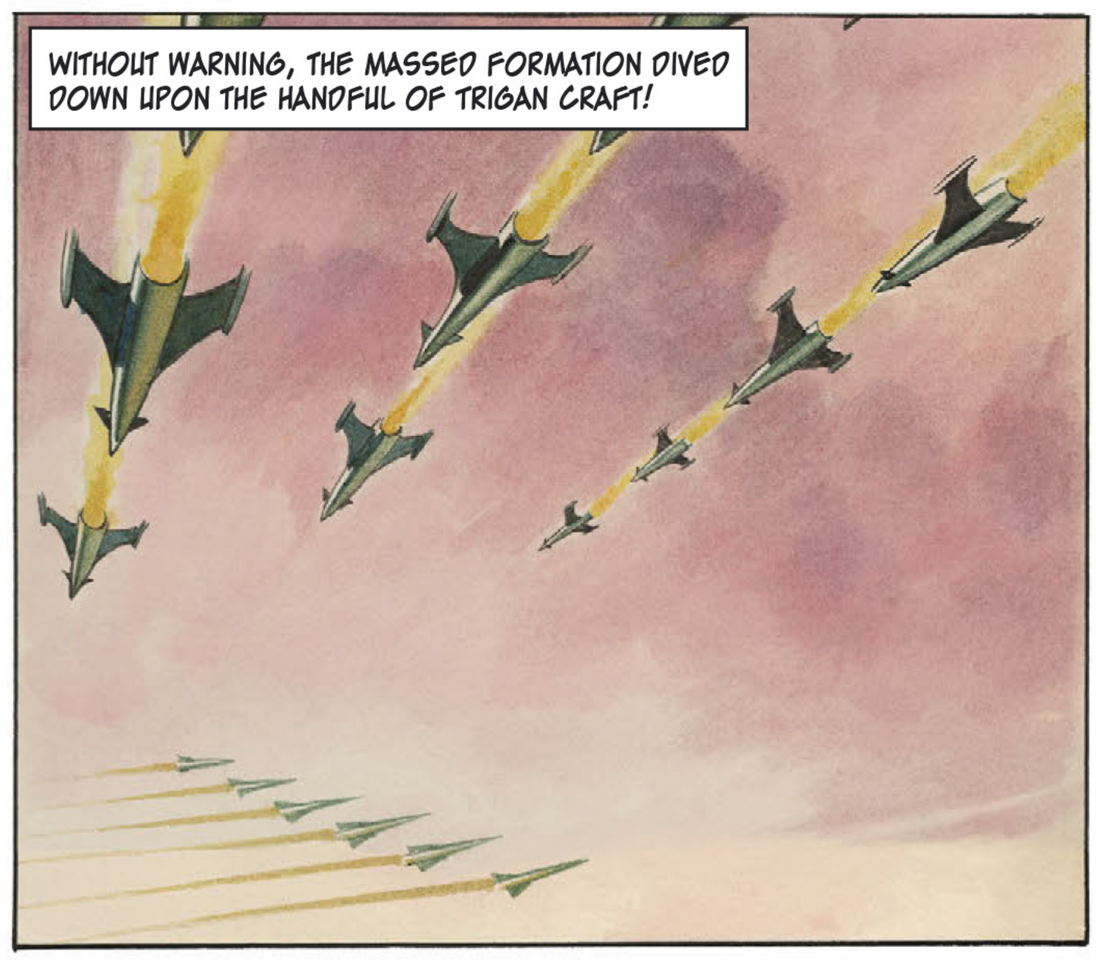
WITHIN THE HOUR, SIX TRADERS FROM TRIGAN WERE ARRESTED IN THE MARKET PLACE AND DRAGGED THROUGH THE JEERING CROWD TO IMPRISONMENT.
LOCK THEM UP! WE'LL SHOW THESE TRIGAN BARBARIANS! DEATH TO THE TRIGANS!


WHEN THE STORY OF THE IMPRISONMENT OF THE SIX MEN REACHED TRIGAN, A FURIOUS MOB GATHERED, AND IT WAS YENNI WHO INCITED THEM TO THE VIOLENCE THAT FOLLOWED.
NOW YOU SEE WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE WE'VE ACCEPTED AS FRIENDS! ARE WE GOING TO LET THEM GET AWAY WITH IT?
NO! NO! DOWN WITH THE HERICONS!

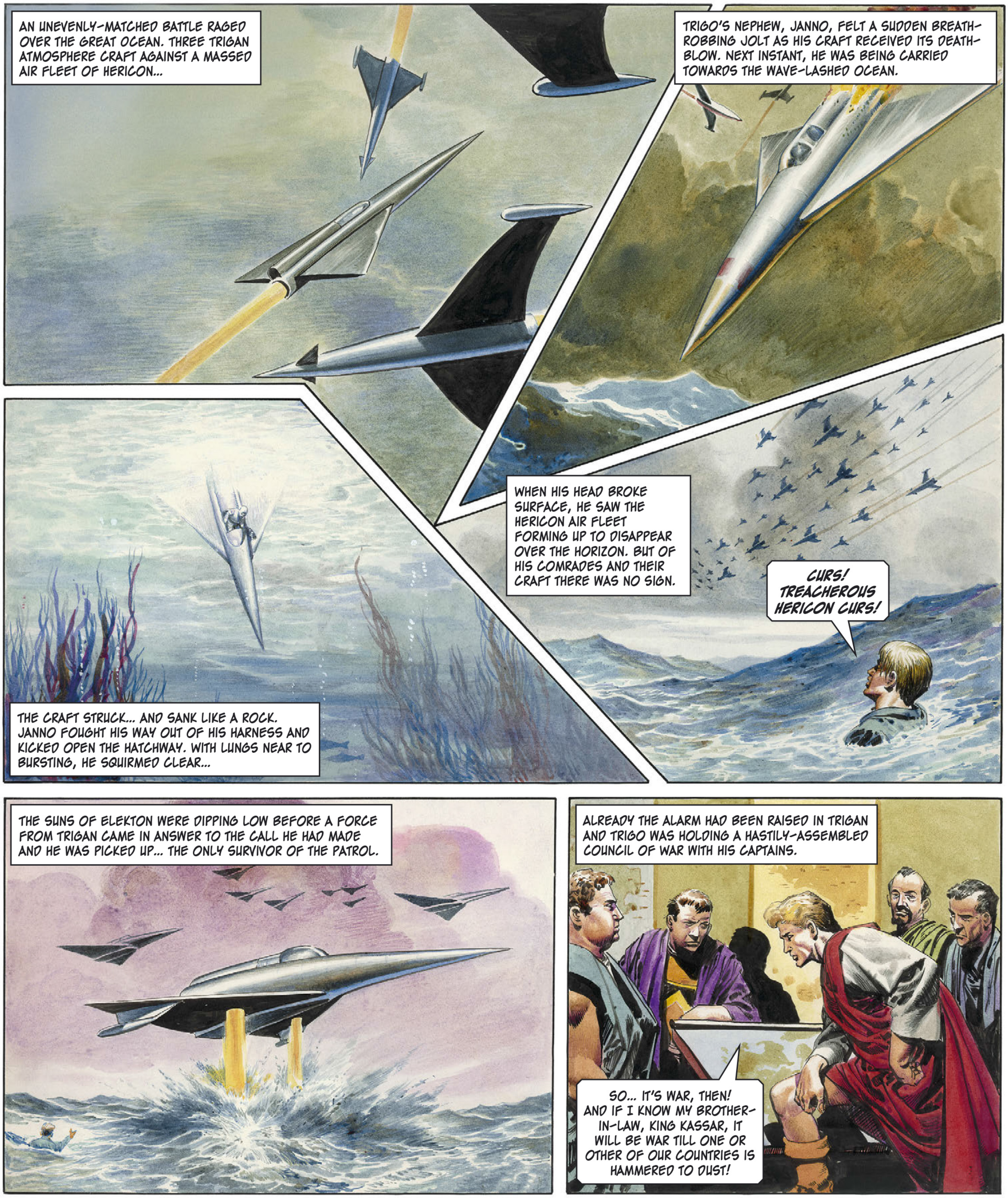
THE ARMED MOB SWEPT THROUGH THE MARKET PLACE, OVERTURNING STALLS AND ATTACKING EVERY HERICON IN SIGHT. AND THE HERICONS DEFENDED THEMSELVES!
CUT THEM DOWN... NO MERCY!
BARBARIANS!

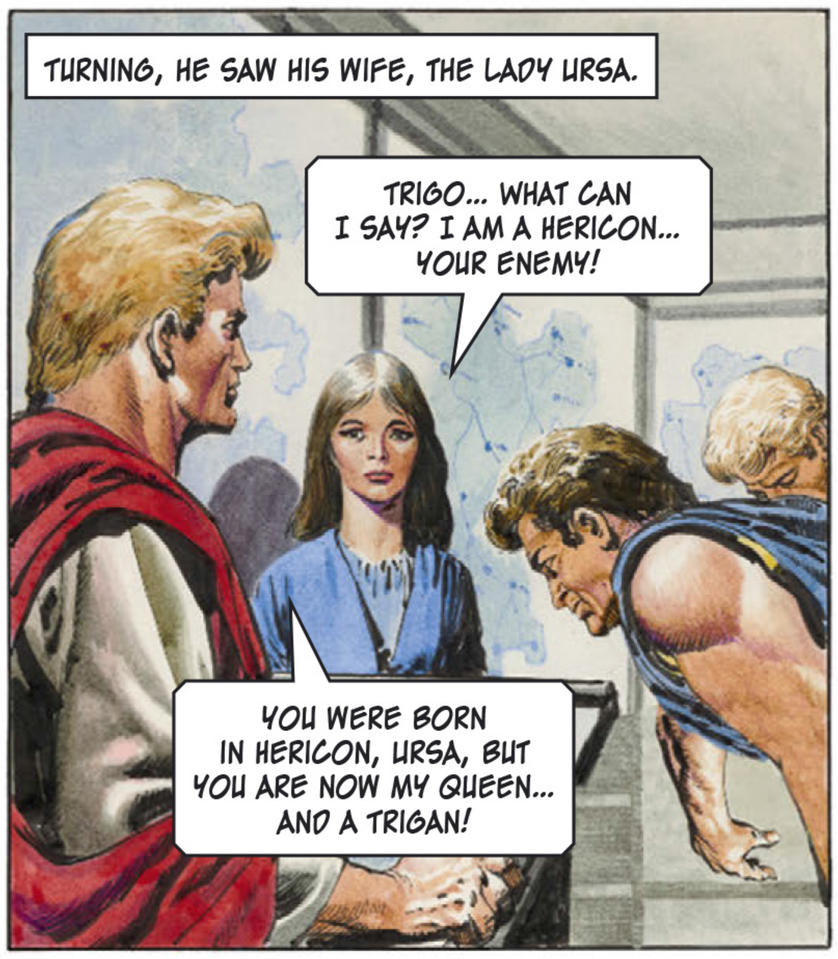
TRIGO HIMSELF LED THE GUARDS TO THE SCENE OF THE RIOT AND QUELLED THE FIGHTING. AND THEN HE GAZED ABOUT HIM AT THE DESTRUCTION...
KNOWING MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, KING KASSAR, THIS CAN ONLY LEAD TO EVEN WORSE TROUBLE!

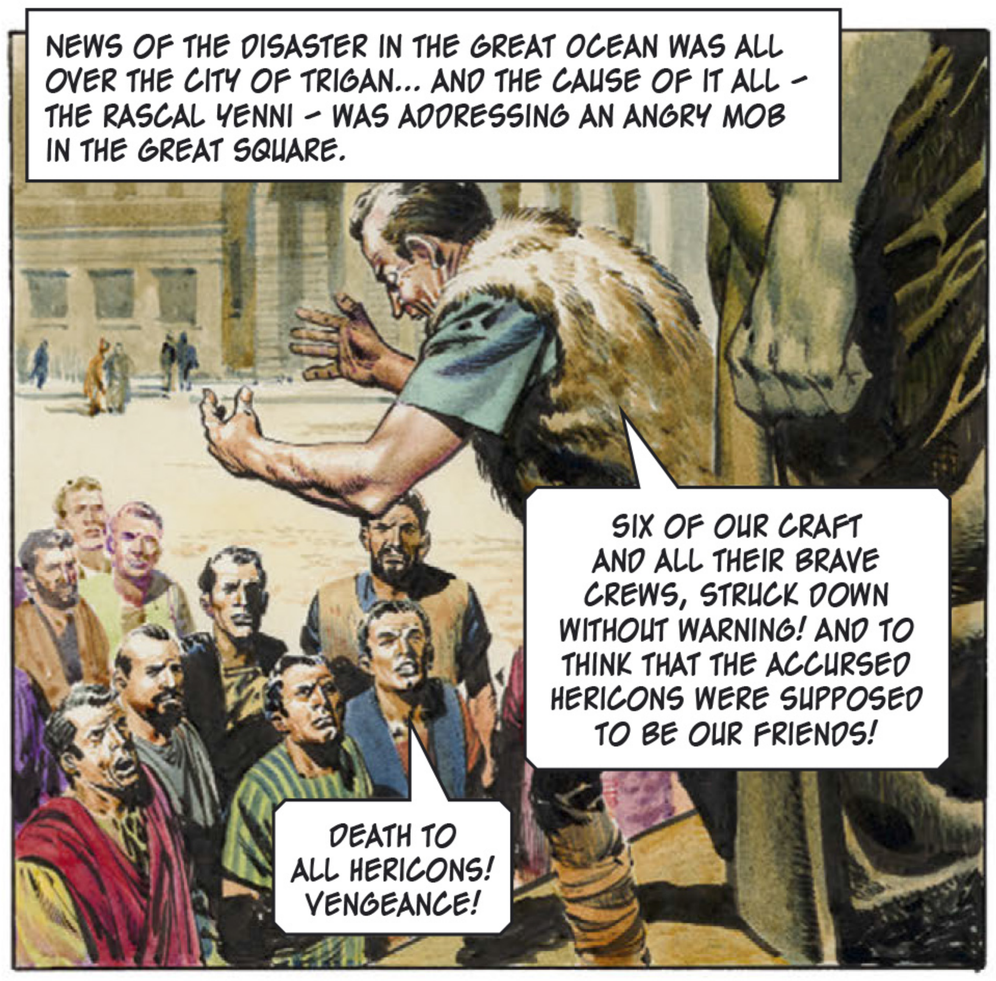

THE FOLLOWING DAY, A TRIGAN AIR PATROL WAS FLYING OVER THE GREAT OCEAN. COMMANDING THE PATROL WAS TRIGO'S NEPHEW, JANNO. AND THEN... IT HAPPENED!
FORMATION OF HERICON CRAFT AHEAD AND ABOVE!
A BIG FORMATION, TOO... WHAT ARE THEY DOING IN THIS AREA IN SUCH NUMBERS?


WITHOUT WARNING, THE MASSED FORMATION DIVED DOWN UPON THE HANDFUL OF TRIGAN CRAFT!

THEY OPENED FIRE... AND THREE OF JANNO'S CRAFT DISINTEGRATED IN LURID FIREBALLS!
JANNO SHOUTED HOARSELY INTO HIS MICROPHONE...
I AM UNDER ATTACK BY A HERICON FLEET! HEAVILY OUTNUMBERED! SEND REINFORCEMENTS BEFORE WE'RE ALL WIPED OUT!


AN UNEVENLY-MATCHED BATTLE RAGED OVER THE GREAT OCEAN. THREE TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT AGAINST A MASSED AIR FLEET OF HERICON...
TRIGO'S NEPHEW, JANNO, FELT A SUDDEN BREATH-ROBBING JOLT AS HIS CRAFT RECEIVED ITS DEATH-BLOW. NEXT INSTANT, HE WAS BEING CARRIED TOWARDS THE WAVE-LASHED OCEAN.
THE CRAFT STRUCK... AND SANK LIKE A ROCK. JANNO FOUGHT HIS WAY OUT OF HIS HARNESS AND KICKED OPEN THE HATCHWAY. WITH LUNGS NEAR TO BURSTING, HE SQUIRMED CLEAR...
WHEN HIS HEAD BROKE SURFACE, HE SAW THE HERICON AIR FLEET FORMING UP TO DISAPPEAR OVER THE HORIZON. BUT OF HIS COMRADES AND THEIR CRAFT THERE WAS NO SIGN.
CURS! TREACHEROUS HERICON CURS!
THE SUNS OF ELEKTON WERE DIPPING LOW BEFORE A FORCE FROM TRIGAN CAME IN ANSWER TO THE CALL HE HAD MADE AND HE WAS PICKED UP... THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF THE PATROL.
ALREADY THE ALARM HAD BEEN RAISED IN TRIGAN AND TRIGO WAS HOLDING A HASTILY-ASSEMBLED COUNCIL OF WAR WITH HIS CAPTAINS.
SO... IT'S WAR, THEN! AND IF I KNOW MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, KING KASSAR, IT WILL BE WAR TILL ONE OR OTHER OF OUR COUNTRIES IS HAMMERED TO DUST!


TURNING, HE SAW HIS WIFE, THE LADY URSA.
TRIGO... WHAT CAN I SAY? I AM A HERICON... YOUR ENEMY!
YOU WERE BORN IN HERICON, URSA, BUT YOU ARE NOW MY QUEEN... AND A TRIGAN!


NEWS OF THE DISASTER IN THE GREAT OCEAN WAS ALL OVER THE CITY OF TRIGAN... AND THE CAUSE OF IT ALL – THE RASCAL YENNI – WAS ADDRESSING AN ANGRY MOB IN THE GREAT SQUARE.
SIX OF OUR CRAFT AND ALL THEIR BRAVE CREWS, STRUCK DOWN WITHOUT WARNING! AND TO THINK THAT THE ACCURSED HERICONS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE OUR FRIENDS!
DEATH TO ALL HERICONS! VENGEANCE!

AYE! DEATH TO THE HERICONS... AND DEATH TO THE HERICON WOMAN UP THERE IN THE PALACE... THE WOMAN WHO CALLS HERSELF QUEEN OF THE TRIGANS!

INCITED TO FURY BY YENNI, THE MOB STORMED TRIGO'S PALACE, BREAKING DOWN THE GREAT GATES AND HURLING ASIDE THE GUARDS WHO TRIED TO STOP THEM...
BRING OUT THE HERICON WOMAN!

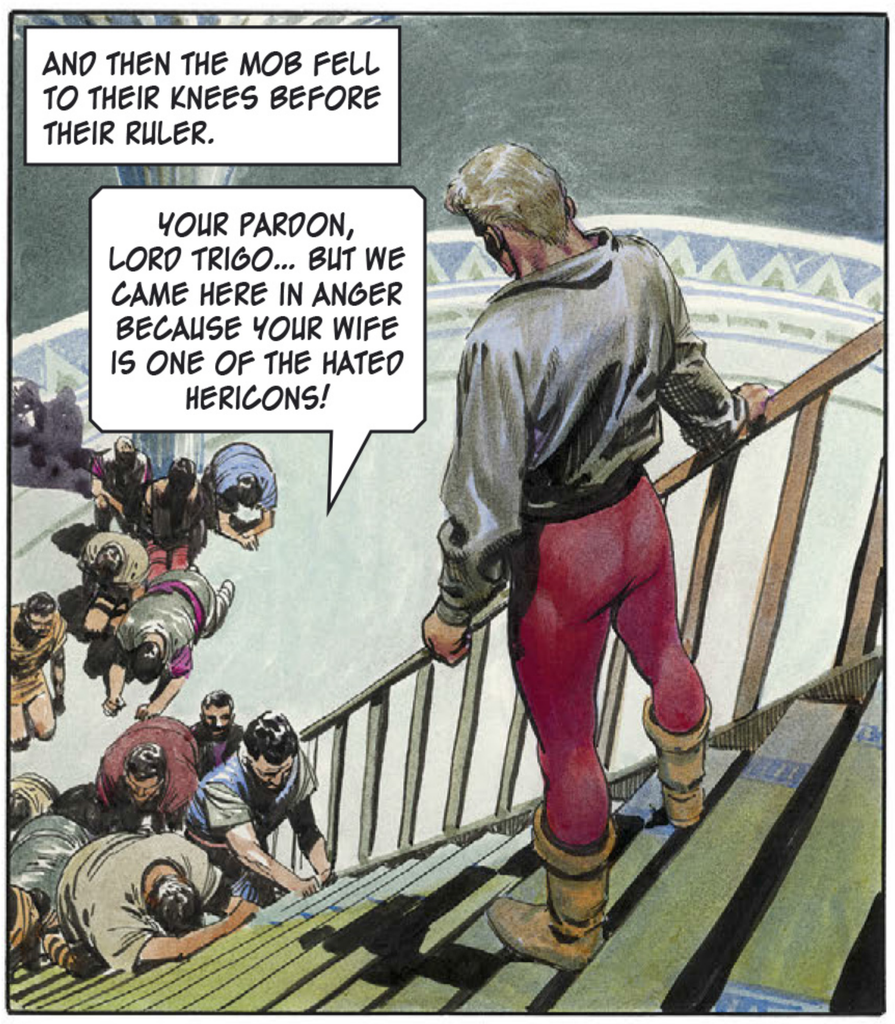
FROM AN UPPER WINDOW, TRIGO SAW THEM COMING.
TRIGO... THEY ARE CALLING MY NAME!
BE CALM... NOTHING CAN HARM YOU!

WHEN THE MOB REACHED THE INNER STAIR, THEY FOUND THEIR WAY BLOCKED BY A HANDFUL OF GUARDS... AND TRIGO HIMSELF WITH A DRAWN SWORD...
WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE?
STAND ASIDE, LORD TRIGO. OUR QUARREL IS NOT WITH YOU... BUT WITH THE HERICON WOMAN YOU MARRIED!

TRIGO TOSSED HIS SWORD DOWN THE STAIRS AND IT FELL WITH A CLATTER TO THE COURTYARD BELOW. AND THEN... HE BARED HIS CHEST...
VERY WELL... BUT YOU MUST FIRST KILL ME! NOW... WHICH OF YOU IS GOING TO STRIKE THE FATAL BLOW?

SEEING TRIGO STANDING UNARMED BEFORE HIM, THE RASCALLY YENNI DROVE HIS SWORD FORWARD...
VERY WELL! IF WE MUST FIRST DESTROY TRIGO...

BUT THE COWARDLY STROKE NEVER REACHED ITS MARK. ONE OF YENNI'S COMPANIONS SEIZED HIM AND HURLED HIM BODILY DOWN THE STAIRS.
NO! WHAT SORT OF TRIGAN WOULD LAY A HAND ON LORD TRIGO?
AAAAAGH!


AND THEN THE MOB FELL TO THEIR KNEES BEFORE THEIR RULER.
YOUR PARDON, LORD TRIGO... BUT WE CAME HERE IN ANGER BECAUSE YOUR WIFE IS ONE OF THE HATED HERICONS!

FROM THE TOP OF THE STAIRCASE, THE LADY URSA HEARD...
MY BEING HERE CAN ONLY TURN TRIGO AGAINST HIS PEOPLE. I MUST GO... FAR AWAY FROM TRIGAN!

...AND SHE HAD GONE BEFORE TRIGO ANSWERED THE MEN BELOW.
THE LADY URSA IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR STARTING THE WAR... THAT CUR BEGAN IT BY DEMANDING VENGEANCE FOR THE HARSH PUNISHMENT HE RECEIVED FROM THE HERICONS – PUNISHMENT THAT HE JUSTLY DESERVED!
YES! LORD TRIGO IS RIGHT!

FURIOUS, THEY FELL UPON THE RASCALLY YENNI AND DRAGGED HIM FROM THE PALACE.
THROW HIM OUT OF THE CITY!
NEVER SHOW YOUR FACE IN TRIGAN AGAIN, YENNI!

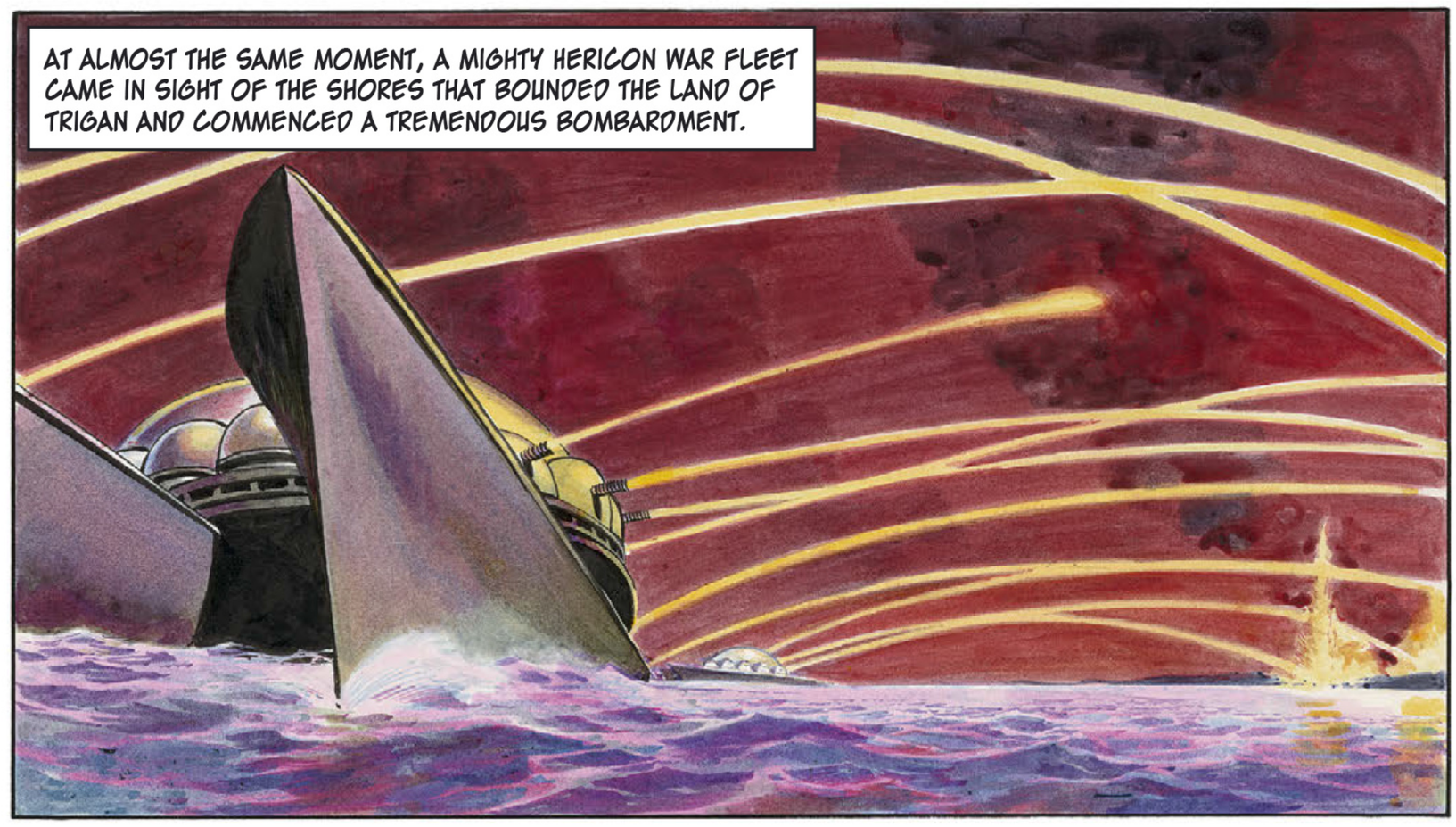
AND THEY CAST HIM OUT OF THE CITY GATES.
CURSE YOU... CURSE YOU ALL! YOU'LL REGRET THIS DAY!

MEANWHILE, TRIGO WAS RACING THROUGH THE ECHOING CORRIDORS OF THE PALACE, CALLING HIS WIFE'S NAME...
URSA! URSA! WHERE ARE YOU...? ANSWER ME!

BUT – SHROUDED IN A CONCEALING CLOAK – URSA WAS ALREADY MAKING HER WAY OUT OF ONE OF THE SIDE GATES OF TRIGAN.

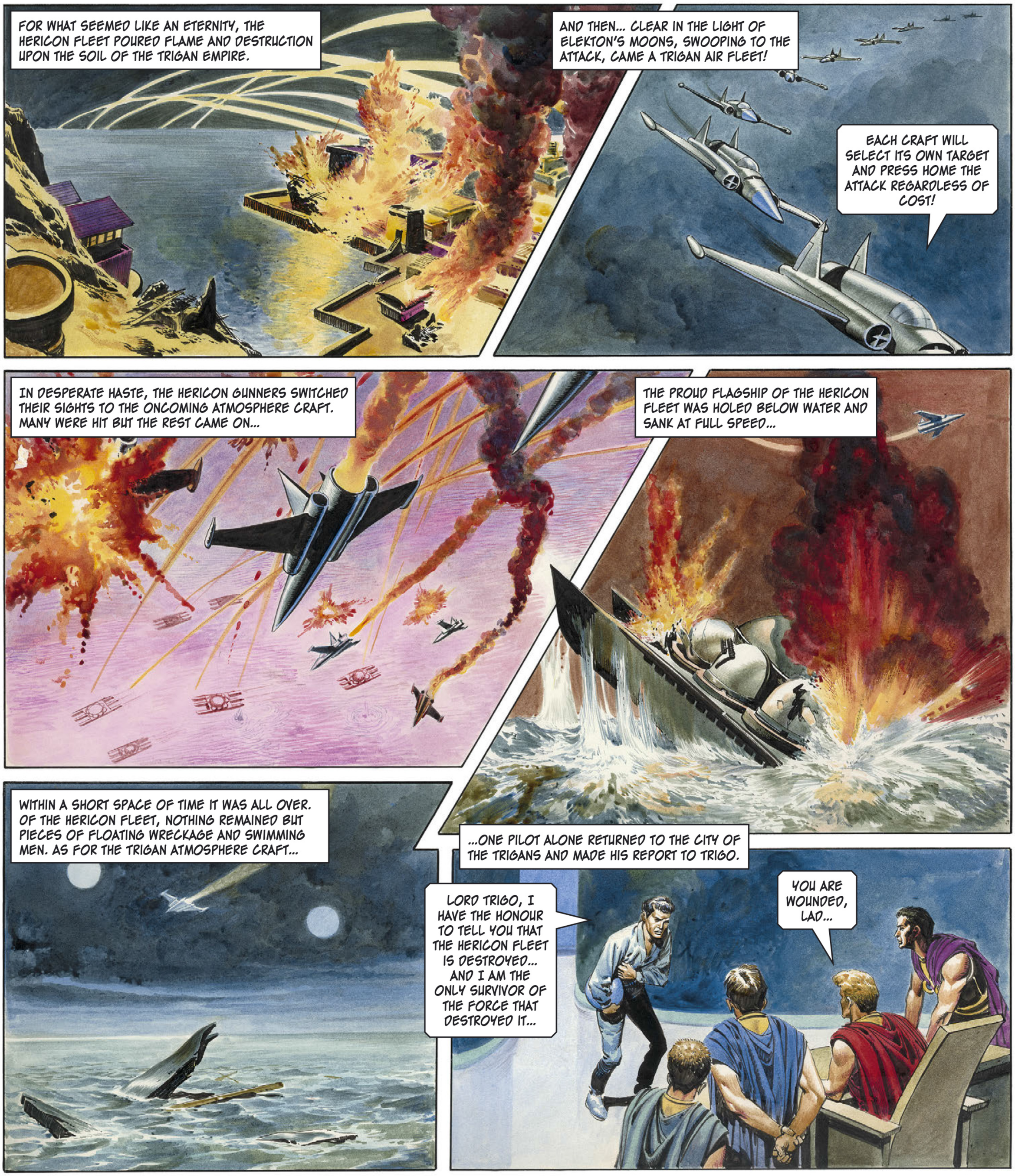
SHE MADE HER WAY ACROSS THE BOULDER-STREWN PLAIN BEYOND. THEN – SUDDENLY – SHE SAW A DARK FORM RISING AHEAD OF HER!
WHO... WHO IS THAT?

AND THEN... SHE RECOGNISED THE MAN WHO CREPT MENACINGLY TOWARDS HER!
NO! DON'T COME NEAR ME! NO!


AT ALMOST THE SAME MOMENT, A MIGHTY HERICON WAR FLEET CAME IN SIGHT OF THE SHORES THAT BOUNDED THE LAND OF TRIGAN AND COMMENCED A TREMENDOUS BOMBARDMENT.

THE NIGHT WAS RIVEN WITH LURID FLAMES!

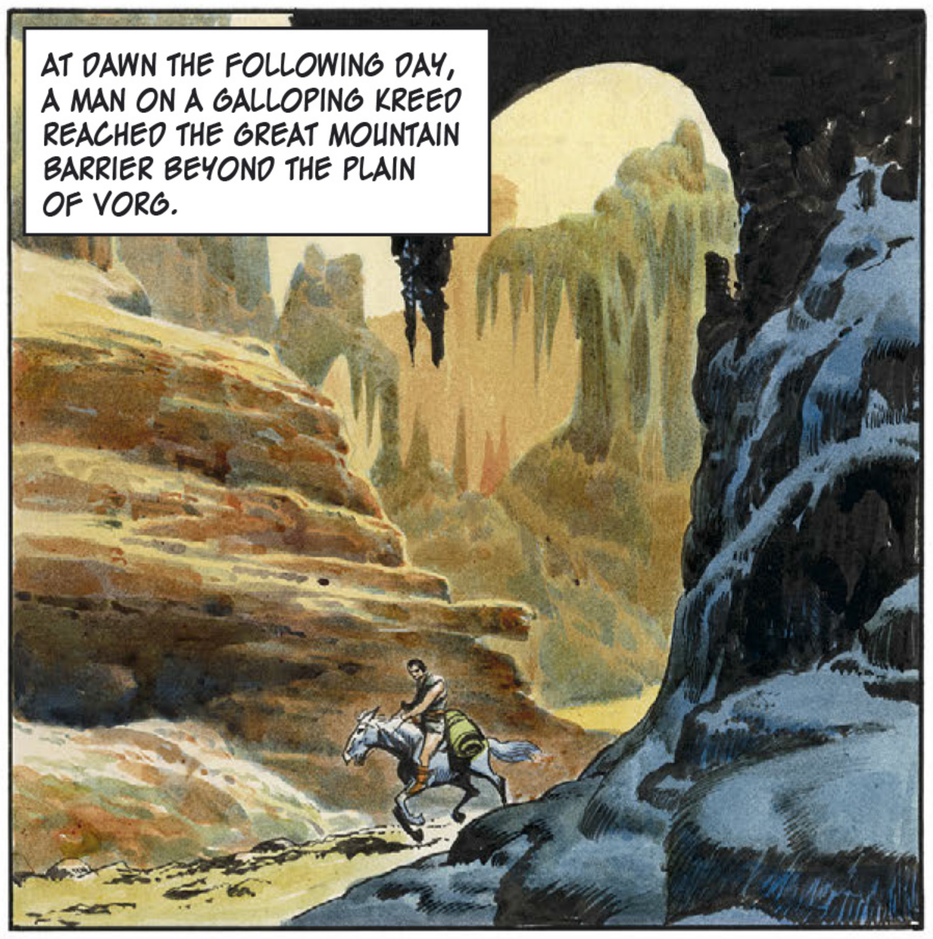
WITHIN SECONDS, THE FORTIFICATIONS ON THE SHORE WERE POUNDED TO RUBBLE... AND THE FRANTIC MESSAGE WENT OUT TO TRIGAN.
UNDER ATTACK... HELP... HELP...


FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKE AN ETERNITY, THE HERICON FLEET POURED FLAME AND DESTRUCTION UPON THE SOIL OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
AND THEN... CLEAR IN THE LIGHT OF ELEKTON'S MOONS, SWOOPING TO THE ATTACK, CAME A TRIGAN AIR FLEET!
EACH CRAFT WILL SELECT ITS OWN TARGET AND PRESS HOME THE ATTACK REGARDLESS OF COST!
IN DESPERATE HASTE, THE HERICON GUNNERS SWITCHED THEIR SIGHTS TO THE ONCOMING ATMOSPHERE CRAFT. MANY WERE HIT BUT THE REST CAME ON...
THE PROUD FLAGSHIP OF THE HERICON FLEET WAS HOLED BELOW WATER AND SANK AT FULL SPEED...
WITHIN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME IT WAS ALL OVER. OF THE HERICON FLEET, NOTHING REMAINED BUT PIECES OF FLOATING WRECKAGE AND SWIMMING MEN. AS FOR THE TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT...
...ONE PILOT ALONE RETURNED TO THE CITY OF THE TRIGANS AND MADE HIS REPORT TO TRIGO.
LORD TRIGO, I HAVE THE HONOUR TO TELL YOU THAT THE HERICON FLEET IS DESTROYED... AND I AM THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF THE FORCE THAT DESTROYED IT...
YOU ARE WOUNDED, LAD...

HIS DUTY DONE, THE YOUNG PILOT FELL TO THE FLOOR. OLD PERIC KNEELED BESIDE HIM AND THEN HE LOOKED UP...
BY ALL THE STARS!
NOT WOUNDED, LORD TRIGO... HE IS NO MORE!

GREAT WAS TRIGO'S GRIEF...
WHAT A TERRIBLE THING THIS WAR IS! ALL THE YOUNGEST AND FINEST MEN OF BOTH OUR NATIONS ANNIHILATING EACH OTHER... AND FOR *WHAT?*

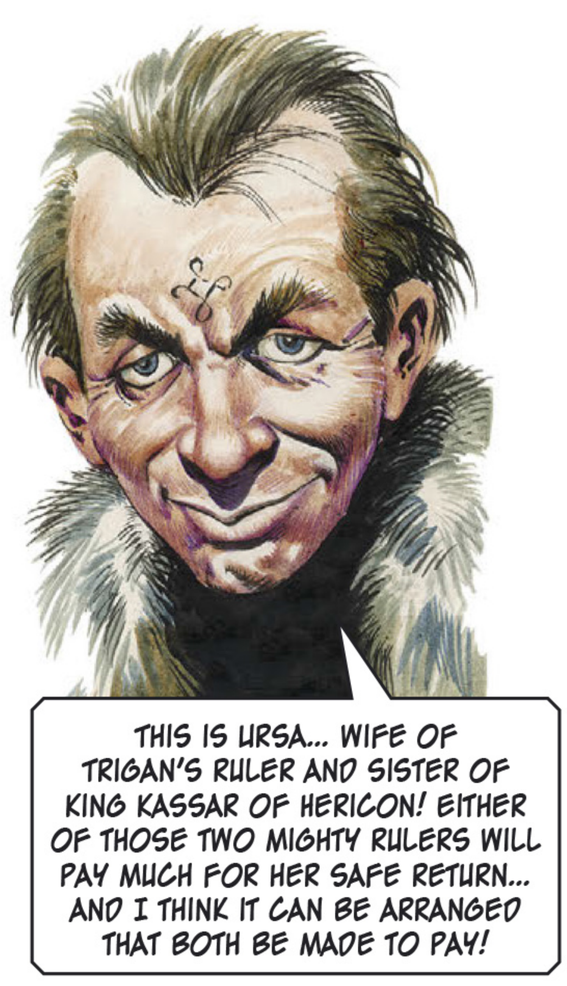
AND MY WIFE, URSA... BECAUSE OF THIS EVIL WAR, SHE HAS DISAPPEARED... *TO WHERE?*


AT DAWN THE FOLLOWING DAY, A MAN ON A GALLOPING KREED REACHED THE GREAT MOUNTAIN BARRIER BEYOND THE PLAIN OF VORG.

SUDDENLY, THE RIDER WAS SURROUNDED BY A GROUP OF SAVAGE-LOOKING MEN OUTLANDISHLY DAUBED IN HIDEOUS WAR-PAINT.
WHO DARES VENTURE INTO THE HUNTING GROUND OF THE NILOS?
FRIEND...! I AM YOUR FRIEND!

THE NILOS – WILD HUNTERS OF THE MOUNTAIN PASSES – TOOK THE INTRUDER TO THEIR CHIEF...
SINCE WHEN WAS A MAN OF TRIGAN THE FRIEND OF THE NILOS? SPEAK BEFORE I ORDER MY WARRIORS TO CUT YOU DOWN!
MY NAME IS YENNI AND I AM NO LONGER A MAN OF TRIGAN. I BRING YOU A GIFT, CHIEF... A TREASURE BEYOND PRICE!

THE TREACHEROUS YENNI DRAGGED DOWN THE ROLL OF CLOTH FROM HIS KREED AND UNWRAPPED IT... TO REVEAL THE UNCONSCIOUS FORM OF URSA, THE WIFE OF TRIGO!
HERE IS YOUR TREASURE!
WHAT MOCKERY IS THIS? YOU SPOKE OF TREASURE...


THIS IS URSA... WIFE OF TRIGAN'S RULER AND SISTER OF KING KASSAR OF HERICON! EITHER OF THOSE TWO MIGHTY RULERS WILL PAY MUCH FOR HER SAFE RETURN... AND I THINK IT CAN BE ARRANGED THAT BOTH BE MADE TO PAY!

TOWARDS MIDDAY, A PAINTED WARRIOR OF THE BARBARIC NILO TRIBE REINED IN HIS KREED AT THE GATES OF TRIGAN CITY. THE GUARDS GREETED THE NEWCOMER WITH WEAPONS LEVELLED, FOR THE NILOS HAD A REPUTATION FOR SAVAGE TREACHERY.
WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE, NILO?
WHAT I HAVE TO SAY IS FOR THE EARS OF TRIGO... TAKE ME TO HIM!

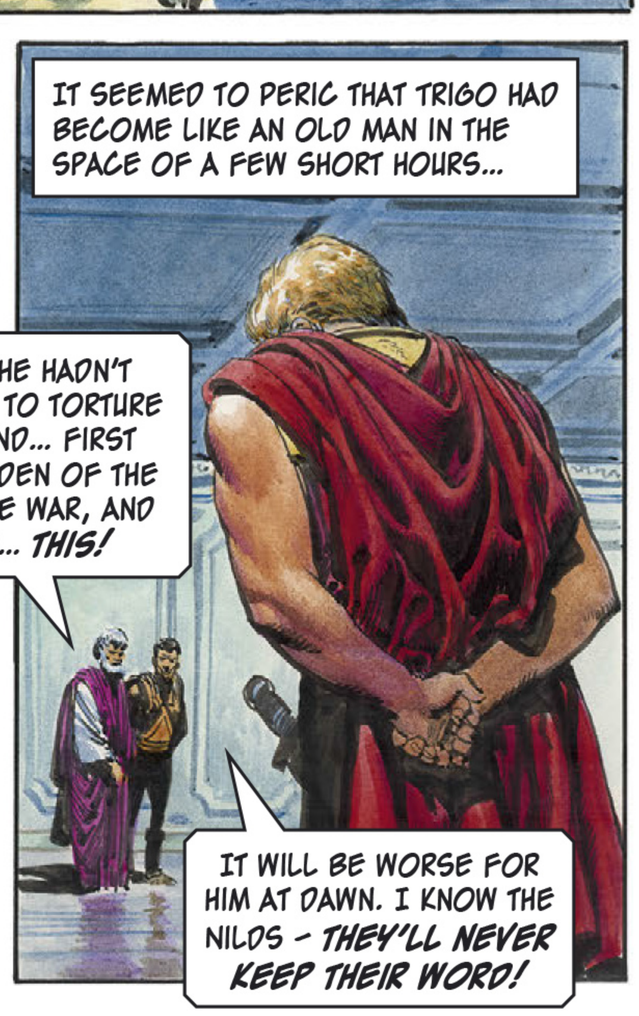
THE NILO WAS BROUGHT BEFORE TRIGO AND, WITH HIS FIRST WORDS, THE SAVAGE TOSSED A SMALL, GLEAMING OBJECT AT THE RULER OF TRIGAN.
WELL?
I BRING YOU... THIS!

TRIGO ROSE SLOWLY TO HIS FEET... AND HIS VOICE CAME LIKE A WHIPLASH.
MY WIFE'S RING! HOW DO YOU COME BY IT, NILO?
SHE IS WITH MY PEOPLE – AND SHE WILL PERISH AT DAWN TOMORROW... UNLESS...

UNLESS...?
HER LIFE WILL COST YOU TWELVE KREEDS LOADED WITH TREASURE. I WILL TAKE THEM AWAY WITH ME NOW... AND SHE WILL BE RETURNED SAFELY AT TOMORROW'S DAWN!

WISE OLD PERIC SPOKE.
LORD TRIGO! IF YOU HAND OVER THE TREASURE, WHAT PROOF HAVE YOU THAT THESE NILOS WILL KEEP THEIR WORD?
YOU HAVE NO PROOF... YOU WILL JUST HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE!
YOU HEARD WHAT THE SAVAGE SAID, PERIC. GIVE ORDERS FOR THE TREASURE TO BE LOADED!

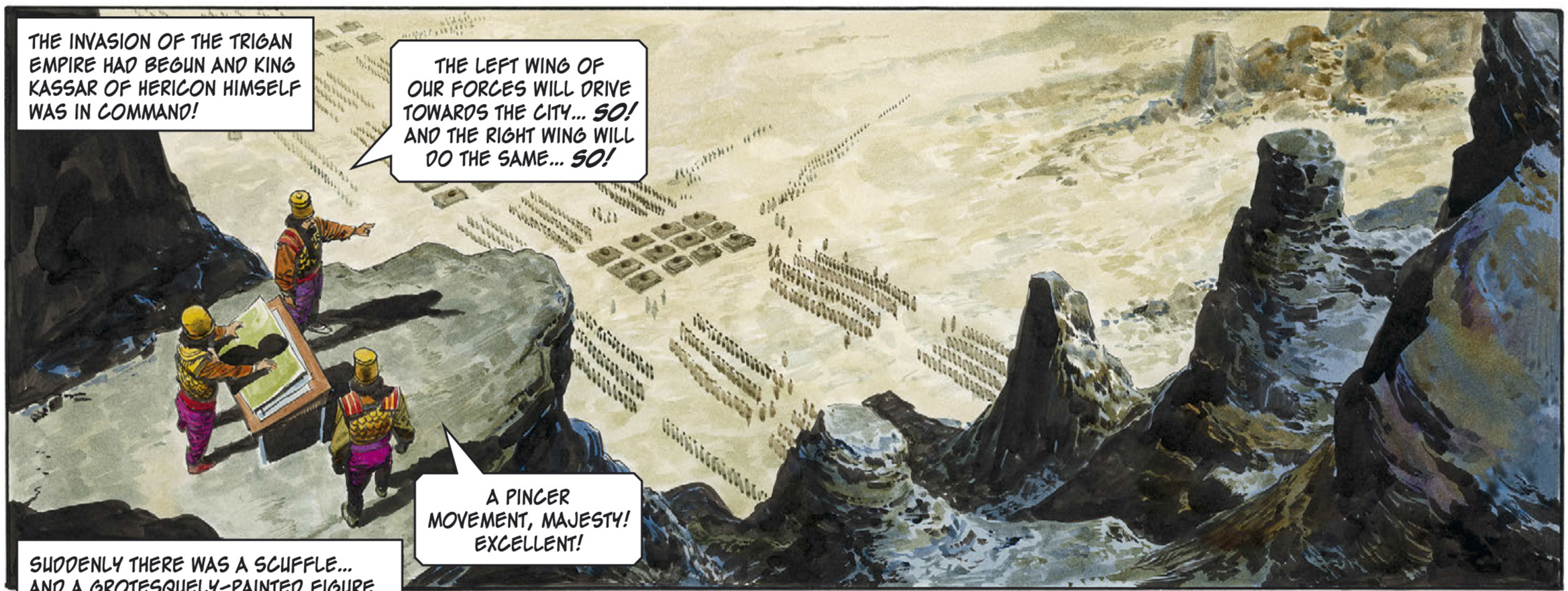
LATER THAT DAY, THE NILO RODE OUT OF THE CITY GATES AT THE HEAD OF A LONG STRING OF LADEN KREEDS.
TELL THIS TO YOUR CHIEF, NILO. TELL HIM THAT IF SO MUCH AS A HAIR IS HARMED ON THE HEAD OF THE LADY URSA, I WILL WIPE THE NILO TRIBE FROM THE FACE OF ELEKTON!
AND I SAY THIS TO YOU, TRIGO... IF ANY ATTEMPT IS MADE TO FOLLOW ME, YOU WILL NEVER SEE HER ALIVE AGAIN!


IT SEEMED TO PERIC THAT TRIGO HAD BECOME LIKE AN OLD MAN IN THE SPACE OF A FEW SHORT HOURS...
AS IF HE HADN'T ENOUGH TO TORTURE HIS MIND... FIRST THE BURDEN OF THE TERRIBLE WAR, AND NOW... THIS!
IT WILL BE WORSE FOR HIM AT DAWN. I KNOW THE NILOS – THEY'LL NEVER KEEP THEIR WORD!

DAWN FOUND TRIGO ON THE HIGHEST RAMPARTS OF THE CITY, HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT URSA WOULD BE RETURNED. AND THEN A LONE PATROL CRAFT CAME IN SIGHT...
THAT'S ONE OF OUR CRAFT RETURNING FROM A DAWN PATROL... IT MUST HAVE BEEN IN A FIGHT, LORD TRIGO!

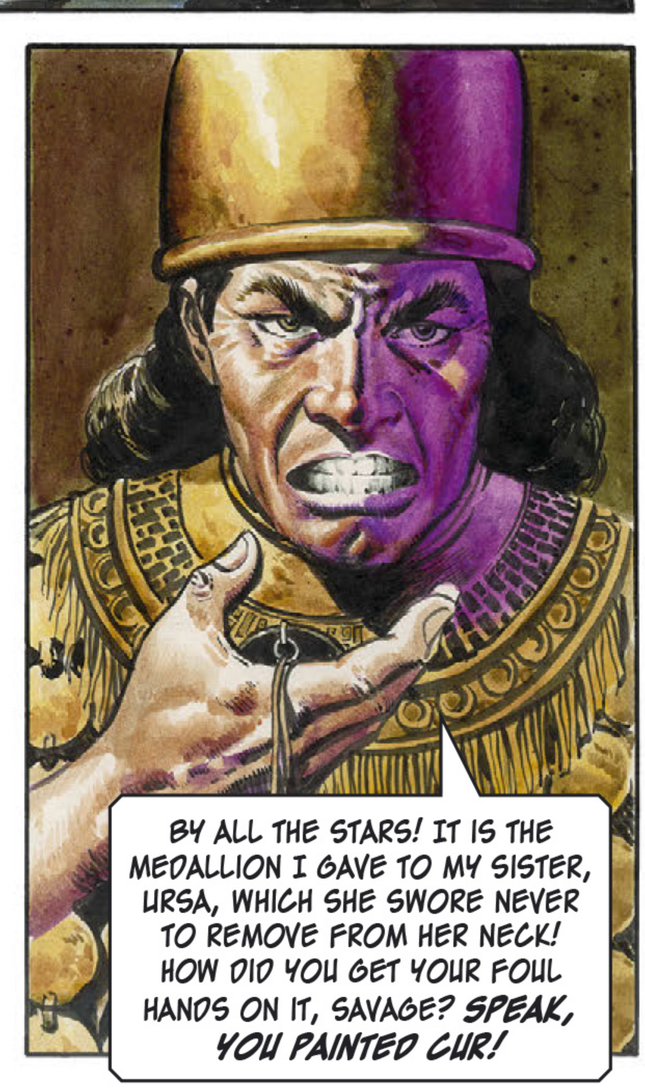
TRIGO WAS PRESENT WHEN THEY LIFTED THE GRAVELY-WOUNDED PILOT FROM HIS SHELL-RIVEN COCKPIT... AND HE HEARD THE TERRIBLE NEWS!
THE HERICONS HAVE LANDED!

IT WAS TRUE! EVEN AT THAT MOMENT, AIRBORNE SHOCK-TROOPS OF HERICON WERE SOARING TO THE GROUND FROM MIGHTY TROOP CARRIERS LESS THAN AN HOUR'S MARCH FROM THE CITY!


THE INVASION OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE HAD BEGUN AND KING KASSAR OF HERICON HIMSELF WAS IN COMMAND!
THE LEFT WING OF OUR FORCES WILL DRIVE TOWARDS THE CITY... SO! AND THE RIGHT WING WILL DO THE SAME... SO!
A PINCER MOVEMENT, MAJESTY! EXCELLENT!

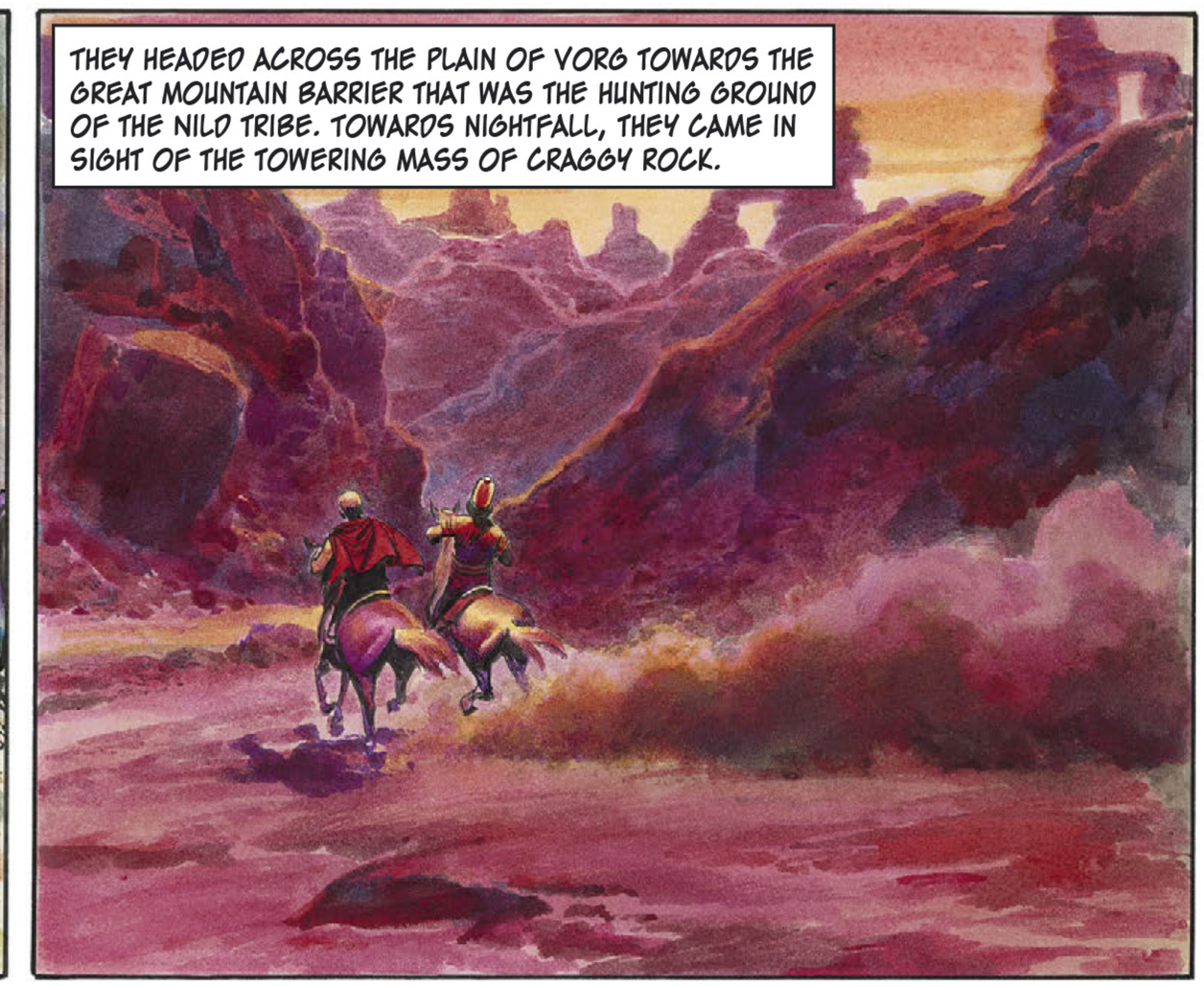
SUDDENLY THERE WAS A SCUFFLE... AND A GROTESQUELY-PAINTED FIGURE WAS DRAGGED INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE KING.
WHAT'S THIS? WHO IS THIS BARBARIAN?
WE FOUND HIM LURKING NEAR OUR OUTPOSTS, MAJESTY. HE CLAIMS TO HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU!

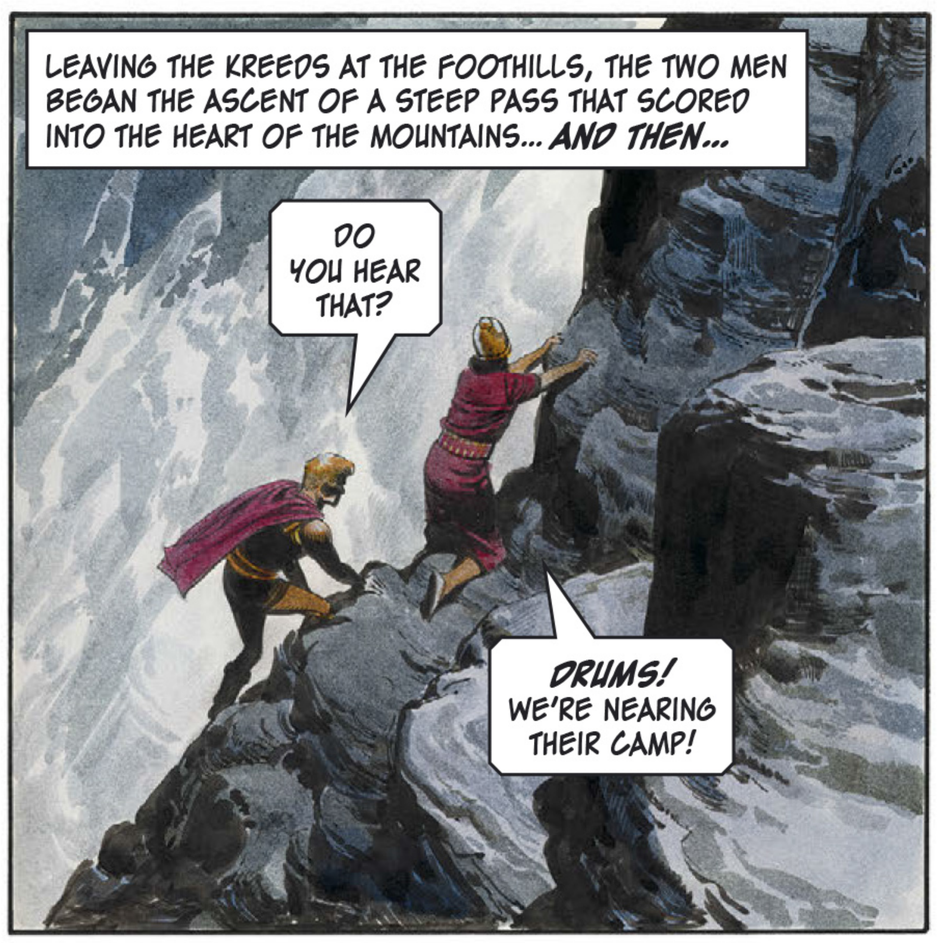
THE NILO FUMBLED IN THE FOLDS OF HIS GARB... AND THREW SOMETHING AT KASSAR'S FEET.
FEAST YOUR EYES ON... THIS!


BY ALL THE STARS! IT IS THE MEDALLION I GAVE TO MY SISTER, URSA, WHICH SHE SWORE NEVER TO REMOVE FROM HER NECK! HOW DID YOU GET YOUR FOUL HANDS ON IT, SAVAGE? SPEAK, YOU PAINTED CUR!

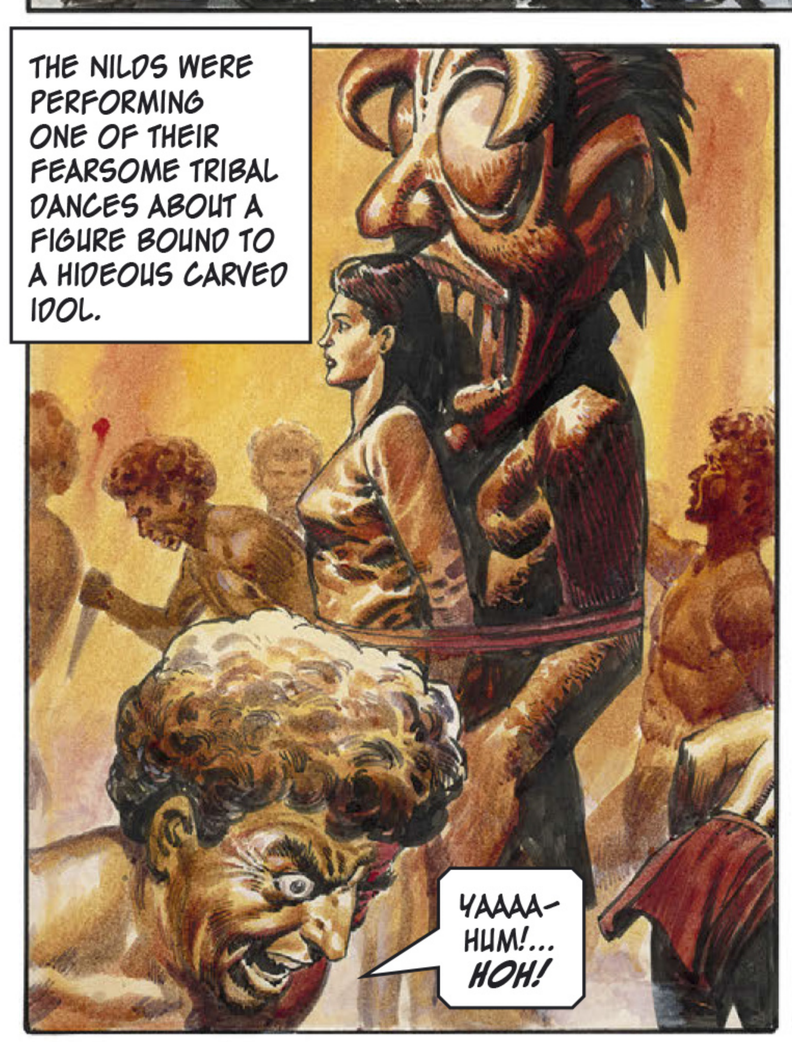
THE PAINTED NILO WARRIOR STARED FEARLESSLY AT KING KASSAR OF HERICON AND SNARLED HIS MESSAGE.
YOUR SISTER IS A PRISONER OF THE NILOS AND IT WILL COST YOU DEARLY TO SEE HER ALIVE AGAIN!
THEN THERE WAS A SUDDEN COMMOTION IN THE RANKS OF THE WATCHING HERICONS... A WILD SHOUT... AND THEN A POWERFUL FIGURE ON A CAREERING KREED CAME BURSTING THROUGH THEM!
AAAAAGH!
IT WAS TRIGO! HE SPRANG LITHELY TO THE GROUND, DISREGARDING THE ROWS OF LEVELLED WEAPONS AIMED AT HIM, AND APPROACHED KING KASSAR.
TRIGO! HE MUST BE MAD TO COME HERE... CUT HIM DOWN!
THE RULER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE POINTED AN ACCUSING FINGER AT THE SCOWLING SAVAGE.
KILL ME IF YOU WILL, KASSAR... BUT DON'T LISTEN TO THAT LYING CUR! I HAVE ALREADY PAID RANSOM MONEY TO THOSE PAINTED, TREACHEROUS DEMONS BUT URSA HAS NOT BEEN RETURNED!
GUARDS... HOLD YOUR FIRE!
YOU RISKED ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH TO RIDE HERE – THE CAMP OF YOUR COUNTRY'S ENEMIES – TO TELL ME THIS?
YOU FORGET, KASSAR, THAT URSA IS NOT ONLY YOUR SISTER... SHE IS ALSO MY WIFE!
KING KASSAR LOOKED OUT, BLACK-BROWED WITH FURY, OVER THE MIGHT OF HIS ARMY...
ALL THIS FORCE AT MY COMMAND AND I CAN DO NOTHING TO SAVE HER! THE INSTANT THE NILOS WERE AWARE OF OUR APPROACH, URSA WOULD DIE!
AN ARMY WOULD BE SIGHTED IMMEDIATELY... BUT NOT ONE MAN!
YOU MEAN...?
...OR TWO MEN, PERHAPS!

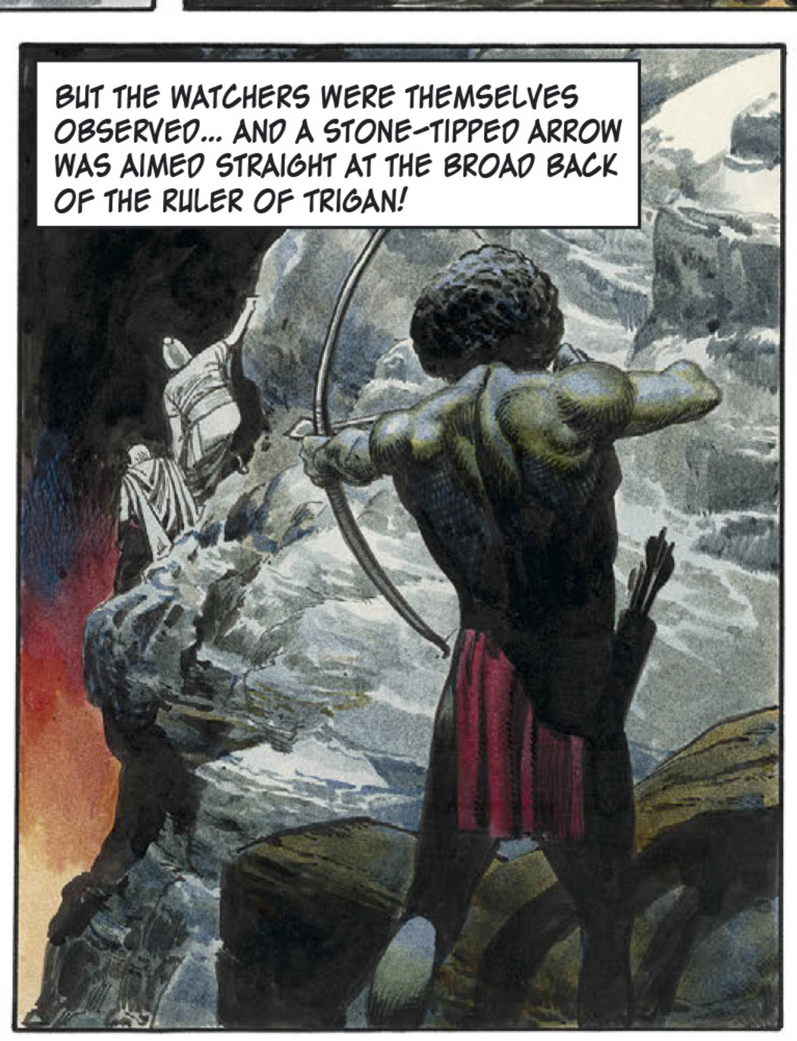
MINUTES LATER, TRIGO AND KASSAR WERE RIDING SIDE-BY-SIDE THROUGH THE MASSED HERICON RANKS, AND EVERY EYE WATCHED THEM GO.
YOU HAVE BROUGHT A GREAT FORCE AGAINST THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
YES! AND WHEN URSA IS SAFE, I SHALL USE THIS FORCE TO SMASH YOUR PRECIOUS EMPIRE TO THE DUST!

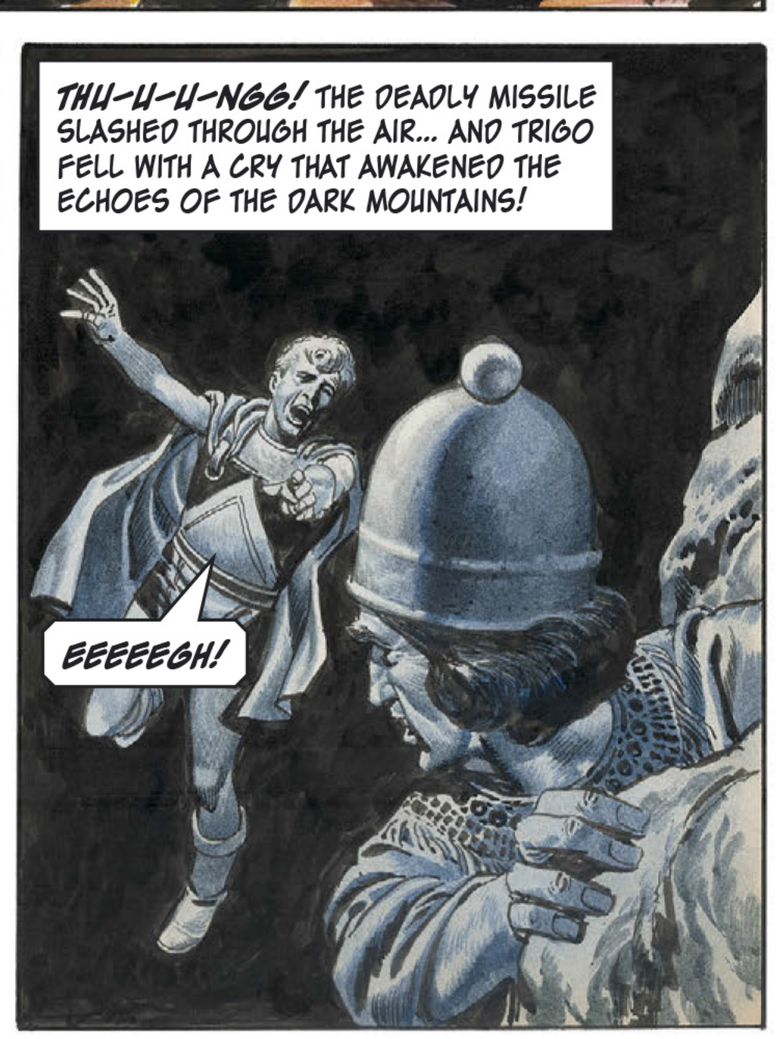

THEY HEADED ACROSS THE PLAIN OF VORG TOWARDS THE GREAT MOUNTAIN BARRIER THAT WAS THE HUNTING GROUND OF THE NILO TRIBE. TOWARDS NIGHTFALL, THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF THE TOWERING MASS OF CRAGGY ROCK.

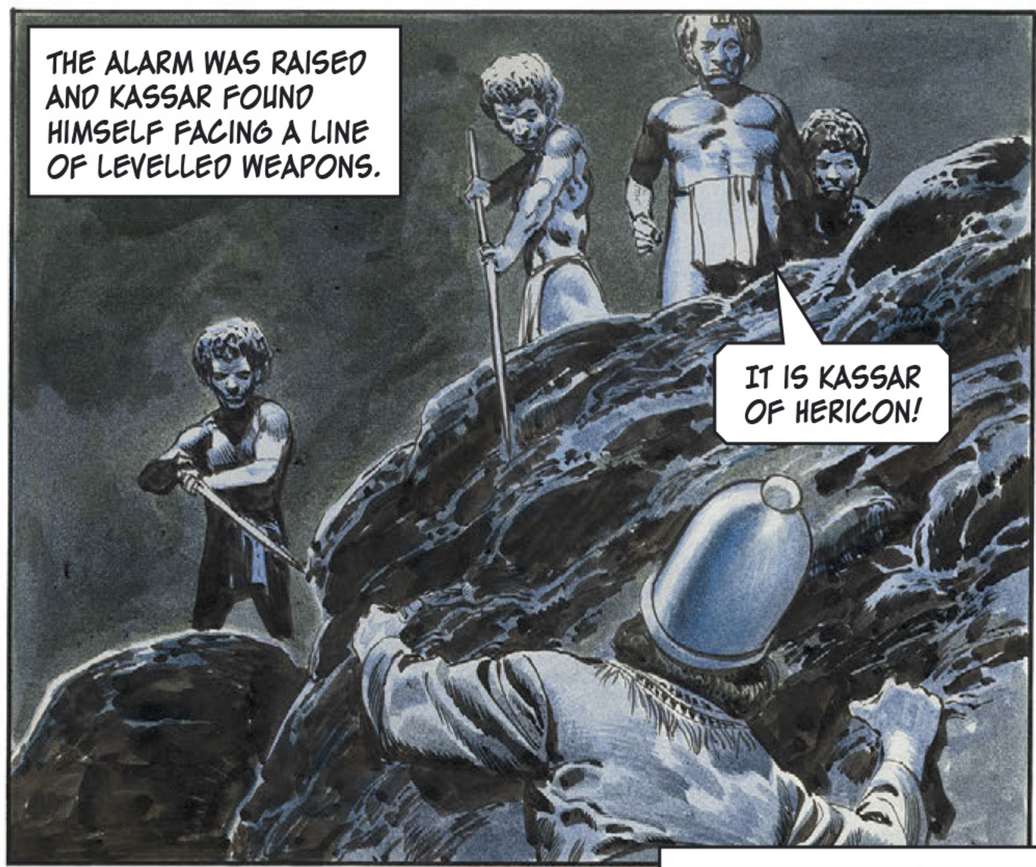

LEAVING THE KREEDS AT THE FOOTHILLS, THE TWO MEN BEGAN THE ASCENT OF A STEEP PASS THAT SCORED INTO THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAINS... AND THEN...
DO YOU HEAR THAT?
DRUMS! WE'RE NEARING THEIR CAMP!

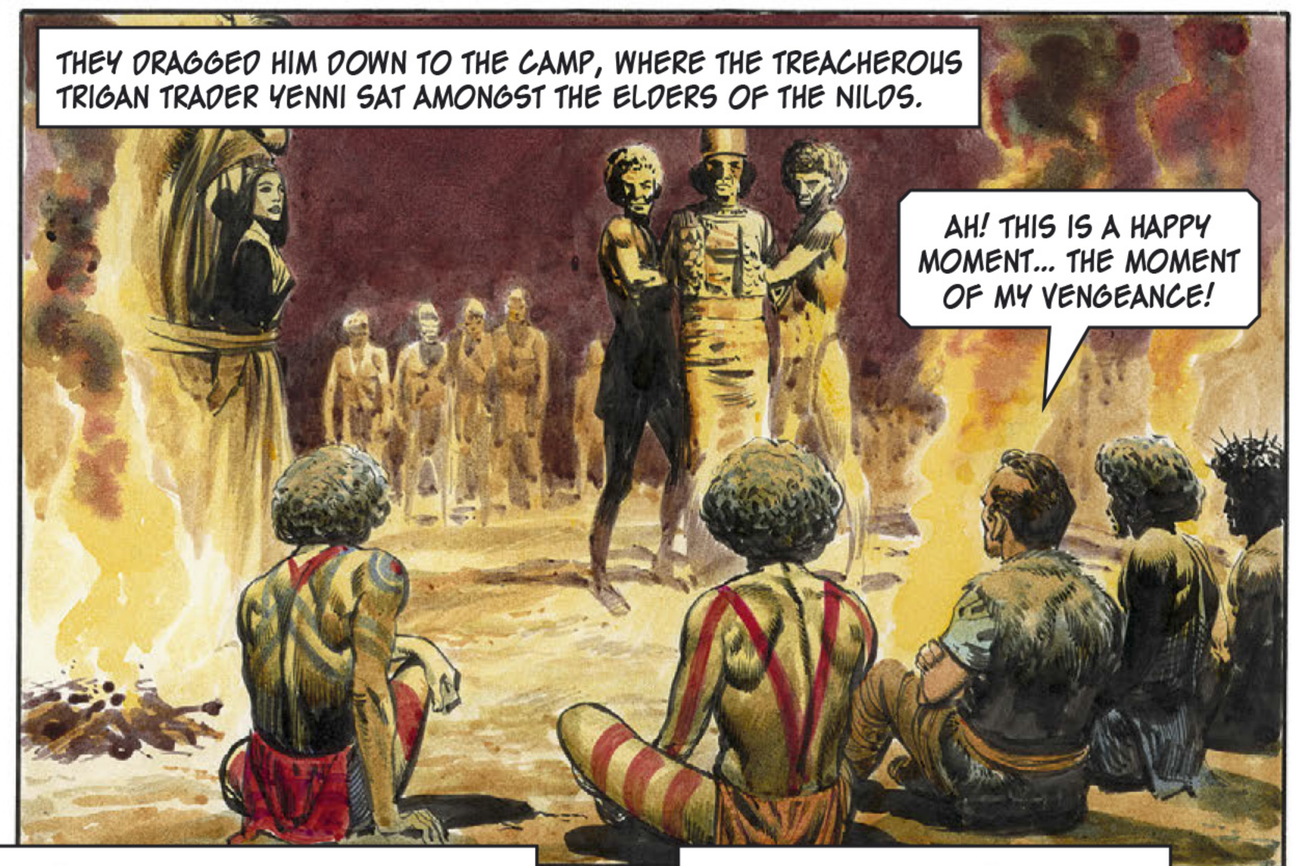
THEY SCALED THE WALL OF ROCK AND LOOKED DOWN ON TO A WILD AND BARBARIC SCENE...
I SEE HER! I SEE URSA!


THE NILOS WERE PERFORMING ONE OF THEIR FEARSOME TRIBAL DANCES ABOUT A FIGURE BOUND TO A HIDEOUS CARVED IDOL.
YAAAA-NIM!... HOH!

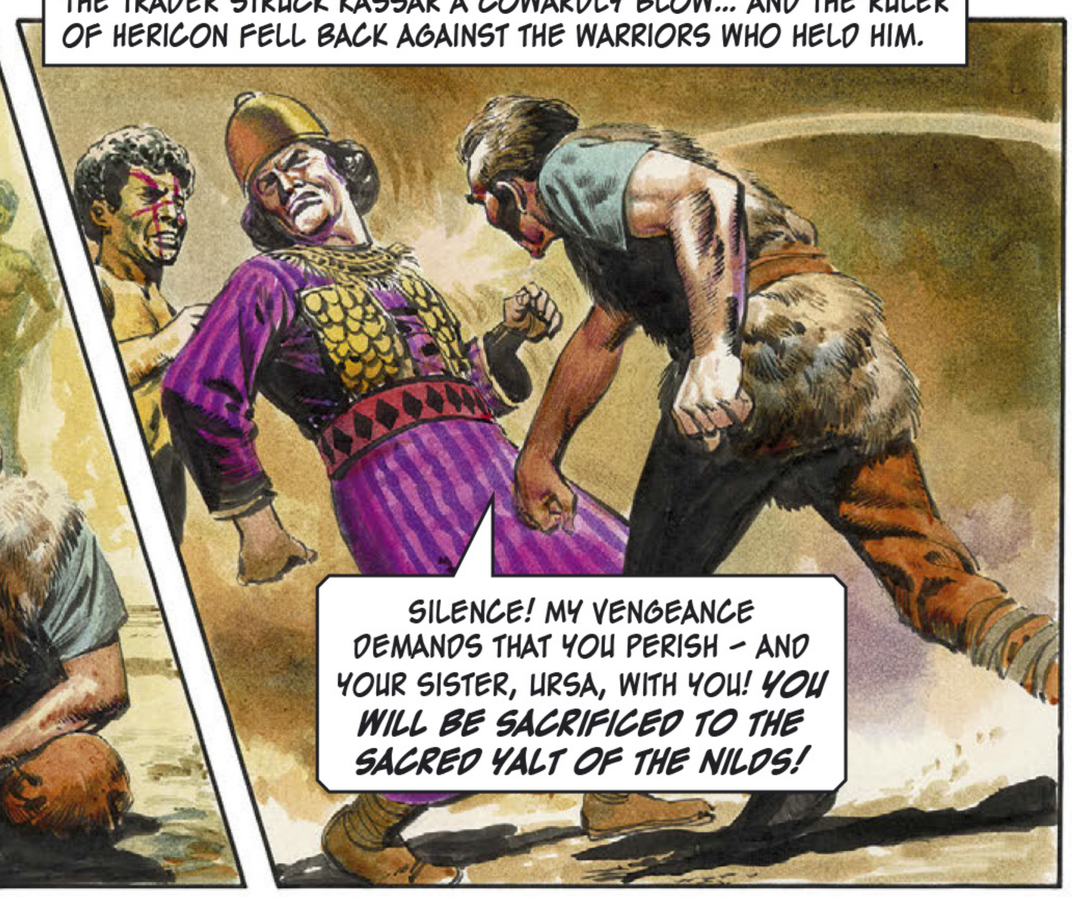

BUT THE WATCHERS WERE THEMSELVES OBSERVED... AND A STONE-TIPPED ARROW WAS AIMED STRAIGHT AT THE BROAD BACK OF THE RULER OF TRIGAN!


THU-U-U-NGG! THE DEADLY MISSILE SLASHED THROUGH THE AIR... AND TRIGO FELL WITH A CRY THAT AWAKENED THE ECHOES OF THE DARK MOUNTAINS!
EEEEEEGH!

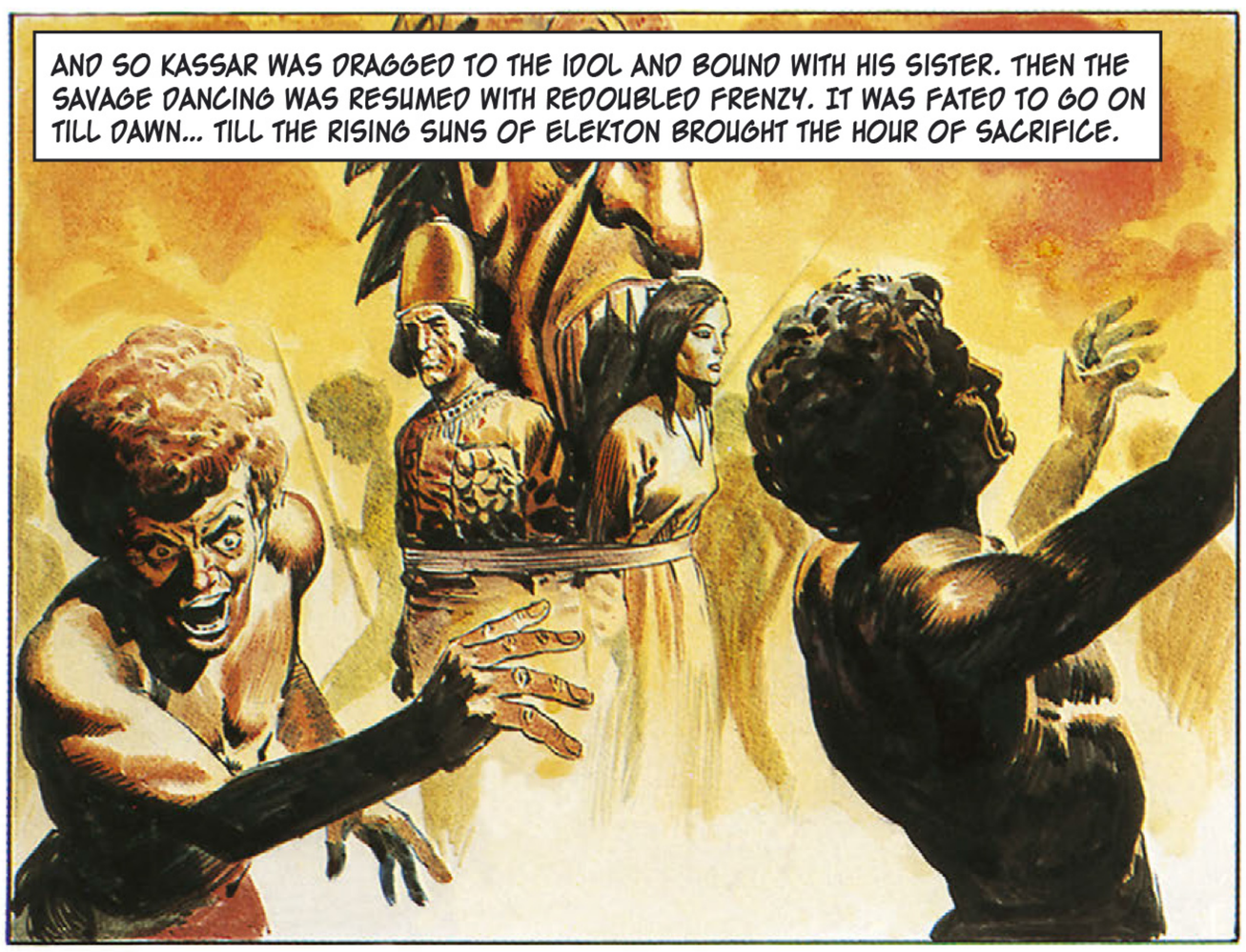

THE ALARM WAS RAISED AND KASSAR FOUND HIMSELF FACING A LINE OF LEVELLED WEAPONS.
IT IS KASSAR OF HERICON!


THEY DRAGGED HIM DOWN TO THE CAMP, WHERE THE TREACHEROUS TRIGAN TRADER YENNI SAT AMONGST THE ELDERS OF THE NILDS.
AH! THIS IS A HAPPY MOMENT... THE MOMENT OF MY VENGEANCE!

YENNI POINTED TO THE LIVID BRAND ON HIS BROW... THE MARK OF A THIEF.
SEE THIS, PROUD KING? THIS WAS DONE AT YOUR ORDERS!
AND WELL DESERVED, I DO NOT DOUBT... THIEF!

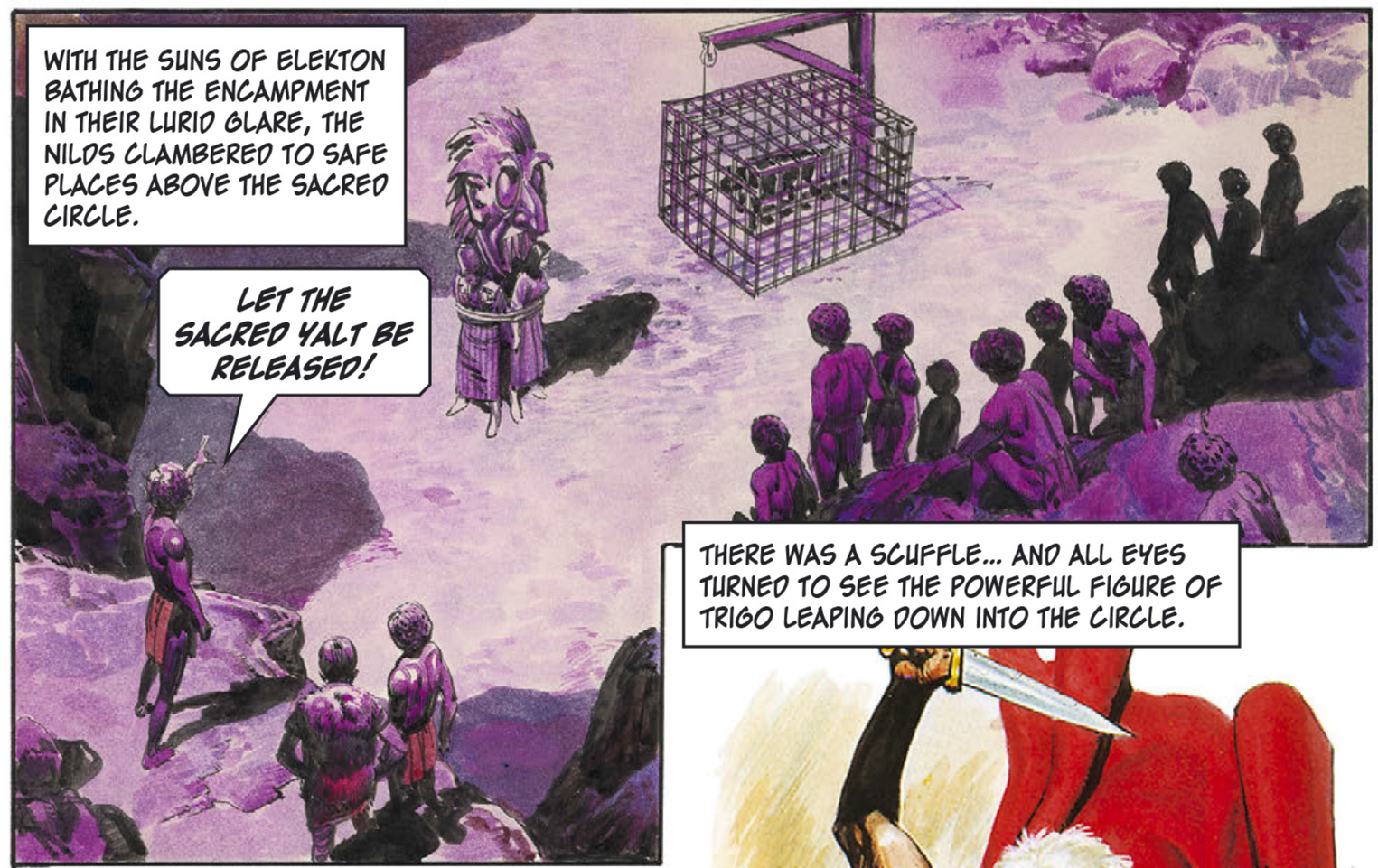

THE TRADER STRUCK KASSAR A COWARDLY BLOW... AND THE RULER OF HERICON FELL BACK AGAINST THE WARRIORS WHO HELD HIM.
SILENCE! MY VENGEANCE DEMANDS THAT YOU PERISH – AND YOUR SISTER, URSA, WITH YOU! YOU WILL BE SACRIFICED TO THE SACRED YALT OF THE NILDS!

YENNI POINTED TO A CAGE WHERE A SABRE-TOOTHED BEAST GROWLED WITH SAVAGE FURY...
I HAVE GAINED ENOUGH TREASURE FROM TRIGO TO ENABLE ME TO LIVE IN LUXURY ALL MY DAYS. THE NILDS HAVE NO USE FOR TREASURE... THEY WILL BE WELL SATISFIED WITH TWO SACRIFICES FOR THE SACRED YALT!


AND SO KASSAR WAS DRAGGED TO THE IDOL AND BOUND WITH HIS SISTER. THEN THE SAVAGE DANCING WAS RESUMED WITH REDOUBLED FRENZY. IT WAS FATED TO GO ON TILL DAWN... TILL THE RISING SUNS OF ELEKTON BROUGHT THE HOUR OF SACRIFICE.

JUST BEFORE DAWN – NEAR THE FOOT OF THE CLIFF BEYOND THE CAMP – A MAN SLUMPED OVER A ROCKY OUTCROP RAISED HIS HEAD AND GROANED FEEBLY.
UUUUGH!

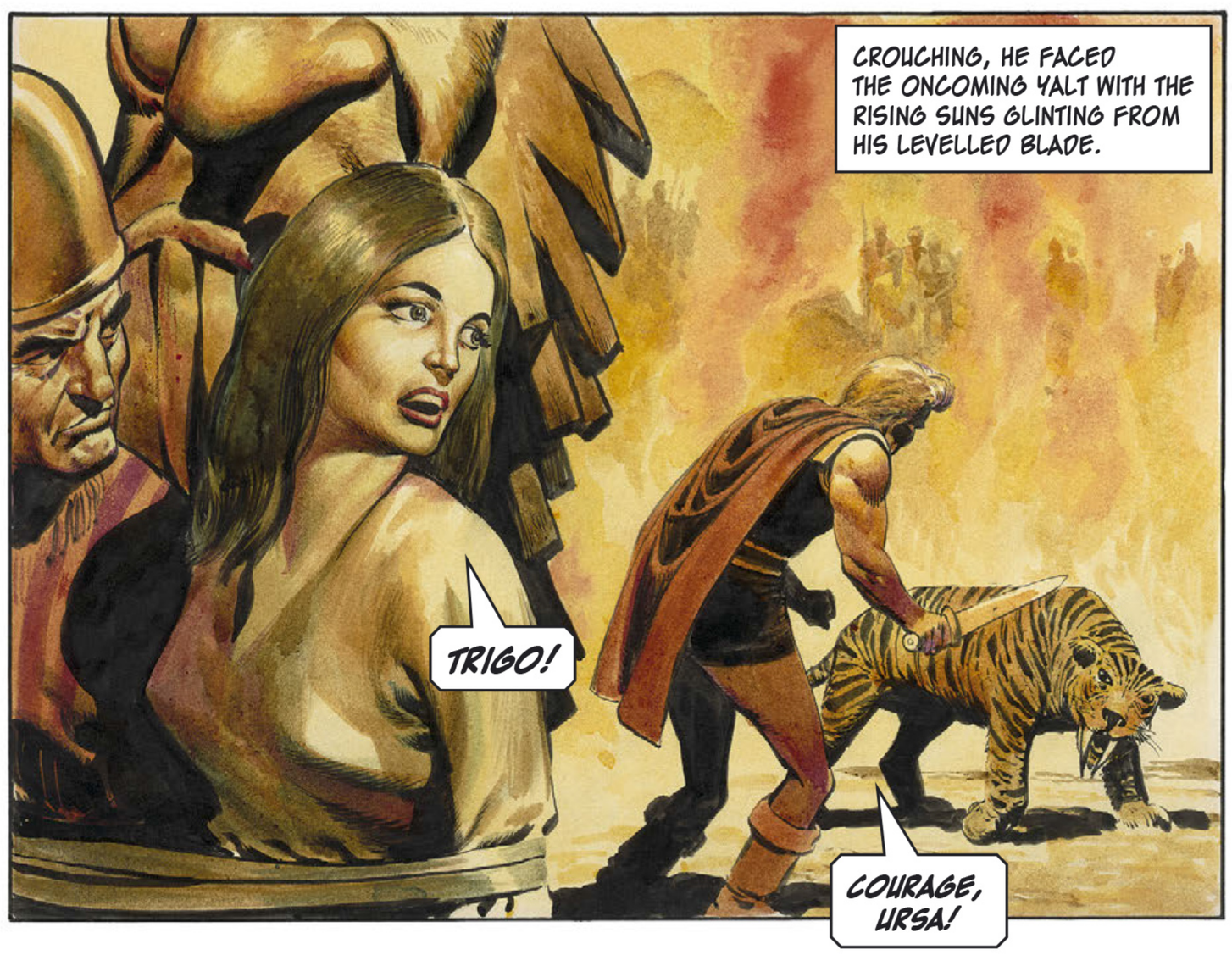
TRIGO LIVED! STAUNCHING THE ARROW WOUND IN HIS SHOULDER, HE RAISED HIMSELF UP AND LOOKED ABOUT HIM.
WHAT DEMON'S WORK GOES ON IN THE CAMP OF THE NILDS?


WITH THE SUNS OF ELEKTON BATHING THE ENCAMPMENT IN THEIR LURID GLARE, THE NILDS CLAMBERED TO SAFE PLACES ABOVE THE SACRED CIRCLE.
LET THE SACRED YALT BE RELEASED!

GNA-A-A-GHH!

A NILD SENTRY LOOKED DOWN FROM ON HIGH AND GRINNED SAVAGELY... ALL UNAWARE OF THE FIGURE CREEPING TOWARDS HIM!

THERE WAS A SCUFFLE... AND ALL EYES TURNED TO SEE THE POWERFUL FIGURE OF TRIGO LEAPING DOWN INTO THE CIRCLE.
LONG LIVE THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

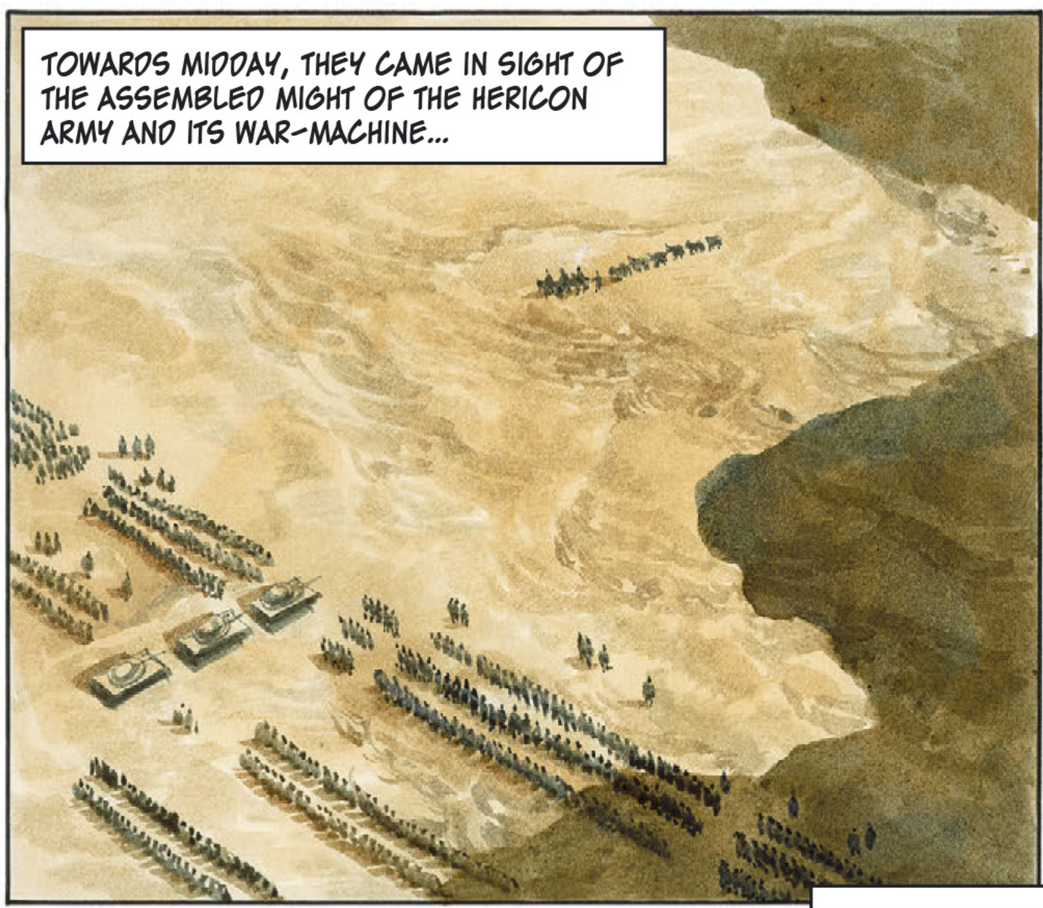

CROUCHING, HE FACED THE ONCOMING YALT WITH THE RISING SUNS GLINTING FROM HIS LEVELLED BLADE.
TRIGO!
COURAGE, URSA!

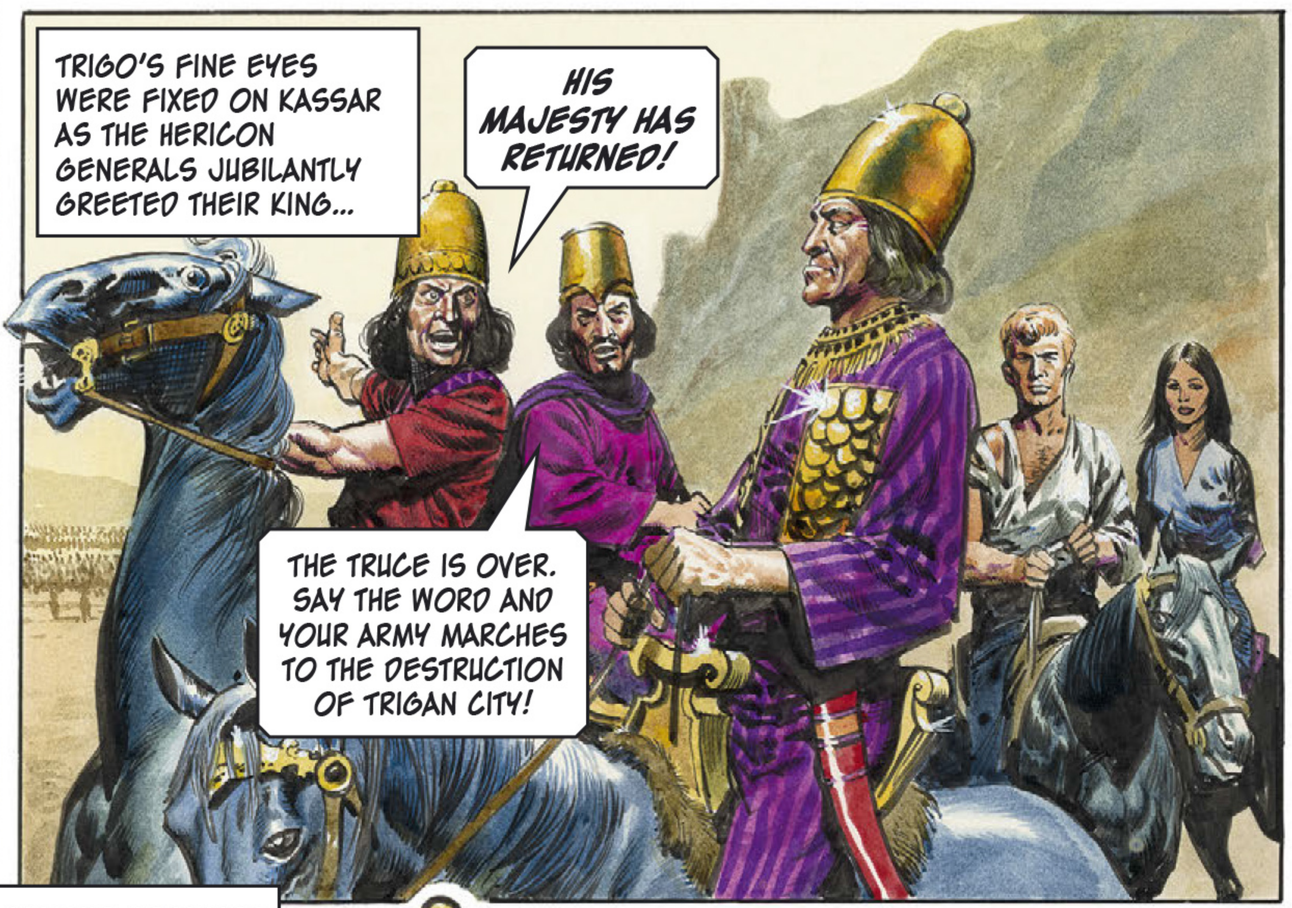
YENNI'S VOICE ROSE IN A SCREECH OF FURY...
SHOOT HIM DOWN!
NO! IT IS WRITTEN THAT ONLY THE YALT MAY DESTROY THOSE WHO TREAD WITHIN ITS SACRED CIRCLE!

WITH A DEEP-THROATED ROAR OF FURY, THE YALT LEAPED AT TRIGO, SMASHING THE SWORD FROM HIS HAND WITH A SWEEP OF A MIGHTY, TALONED CLAW.
AAAAAGH!
NEXT INSTANT, THE RULER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WAS UNDERNEATH THE MASSIVE BODY... AND THE SABRE TEETH WERE LUNGING FOR HIS THROAT!
THE WATCHING NILOS NODDED WITH SATISFACTION AND THE TREACHEROUS YENNI GRINNED WITH EVIL GLEE.
TO SUCH A COMBAT THERE IS ONLY ONE END... NO MAN HAS EVER WITHSTOOD THE SACRED YALT!
SO PERISHES TRIGO THE MIGHTY!
THEN A GASP OF SURPRISE FROM THE WATCHERS AS TRIGO SQUIRMED FREE OF THE YALT AND ROLLED TOWARDS THE OPEN DOOR OF ITS CAGE, WHERE HE HURLED DEFIANCE AT THE SNARLING BEAST.
WHY DO YOU WAIT, YALT? LEAP! LEAP AND FINISH IT!
THE YALT MADE ITS LEAP... BUT TRIGO WAS READY, THROWING HIMSELF FLAT... AND THE YALT'S IMPETUS CARRIED IT TOWARDS THE CAGE DOOR!
IN A TRICE, TRIGO SNATCHED UP HIS SWORD AND SEVERED THE ROPE THAT HELD THE DOOR... IT FELL, IMPRISONING THE INFURIATED BEAST... AND THEN TRIGO CALLED OUT TO THE WATCHING NILOS.
TO THE BARBARIC NILOS, THE SABRE-TOOTHED KILLER WAS A GOD AND THE ELDERS OF THE TRIBE PLEADED IN WILD DESPERATION.
TRIGO! NO!
BEHOLD! ONE THRUST AND YOUR SACRED YALT DIES!
SPARE THE SACRED YALT!
PUT DOWN YOUR SWORD AND YOU MAY GO FREE... AND YOUR COMPANIONS WITH YOU!

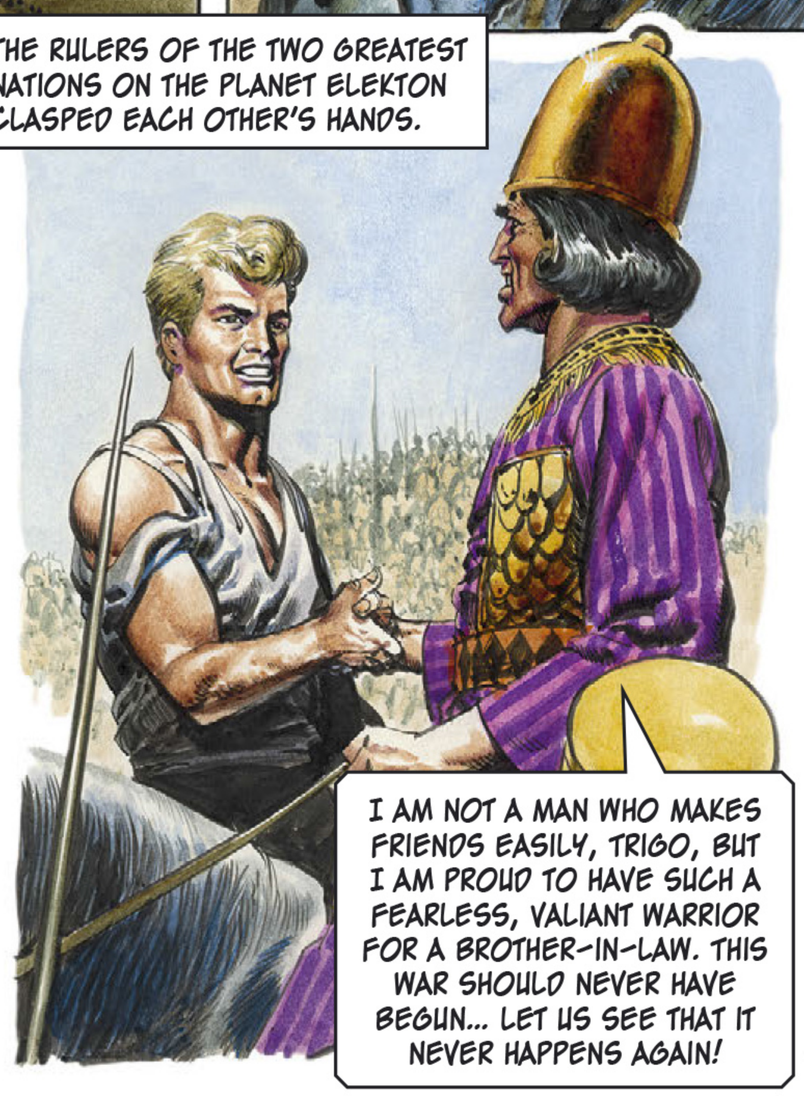
ONLY YENNI'S VOICE WAS RAISED IN PROTEST... BUT THE NILOS HAD NO TIME FOR HIM NOW.
HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES? YOU CANNOT LET THESE PRISONERS GO FREE!
THEY GO... AND YOU WILL GO WITH THEM! YOUR PRESENCE HAS BROUGHT EVIL FORTUNE TO OUR TRIBE AND NEARLY COST US THE SACRED YALT!

AND SO, TRIGO, URSA AND KING KASSAR RODE FROM THE BARREN HILLS, ACROSS THE PLAIN OF VORG... TAKING WITH THEM URSA'S RANSOM - FOR WHICH THE PRIMITIVE NILOS HAD NO USE - AND YENNI AS THEIR PRISONER.


TOWARDS MIDDAY, THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF THE ASSEMBLED MIGHT OF THE HERICON ARMY AND ITS WAR-MACHINE...


TRIGO'S FINE EYES WERE FIXED ON KASSAR AS THE HERICON GENERALS JUBILANTLY GREETED THEIR KING...
HIS MAJESTY HAS RETURNED!
THE TRUCE IS OVER. SAY THE WORD AND YOUR ARMY MARCHES TO THE DESTRUCTION OF TRIGAN CITY!

KASSAR TURNED TO FACE TRIGO... AND THERE WAS A GHOST OF A SMILE ON HIS STERN FACE.
THE TRUCE IS OVER... AND SO IS THE WAR!
KASSAR! YOU MEAN...?


THE RULERS OF THE TWO GREATEST NATIONS ON THE PLANET ELEKTON CLASPED EACH OTHER'S HANDS.
I AM NOT A MAN WHO MAKES FRIENDS EASILY, TRIGO, BUT I AM PROUD TO HAVE SUCH A FEARLESS, VALIANT WARRIOR FOR A BROTHER-IN-LAW. THIS WAR SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEGUN... LET US SEE THAT IT NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN!

SOON THE SKY WAS DARKENED WITH HERICON ATMOSPHERE CRAFT DESCENDING TO TAKE THE INVADING ARMY BACK TO ITS OWN COUNTRY...
...AND TRIGO AND URSA RODE BACK TO TRIGAN CITY WITH THE WONDERFUL NEWS THAT THE TERRIBLE WAR WAS OVER.

VIII

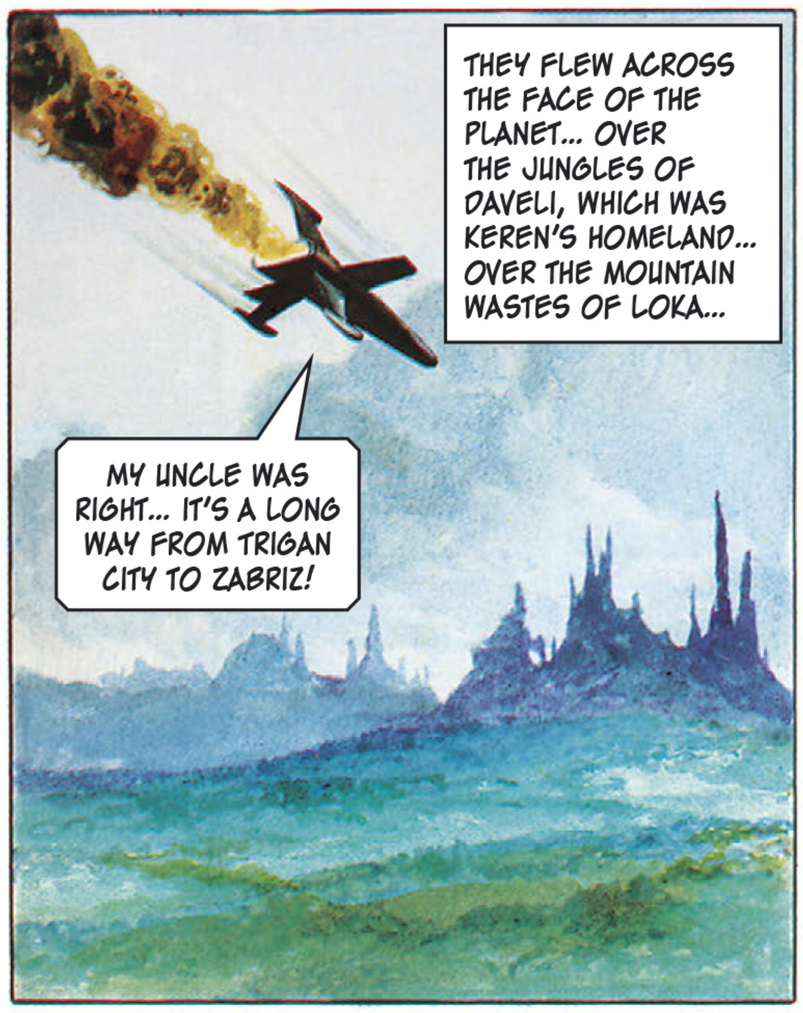
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

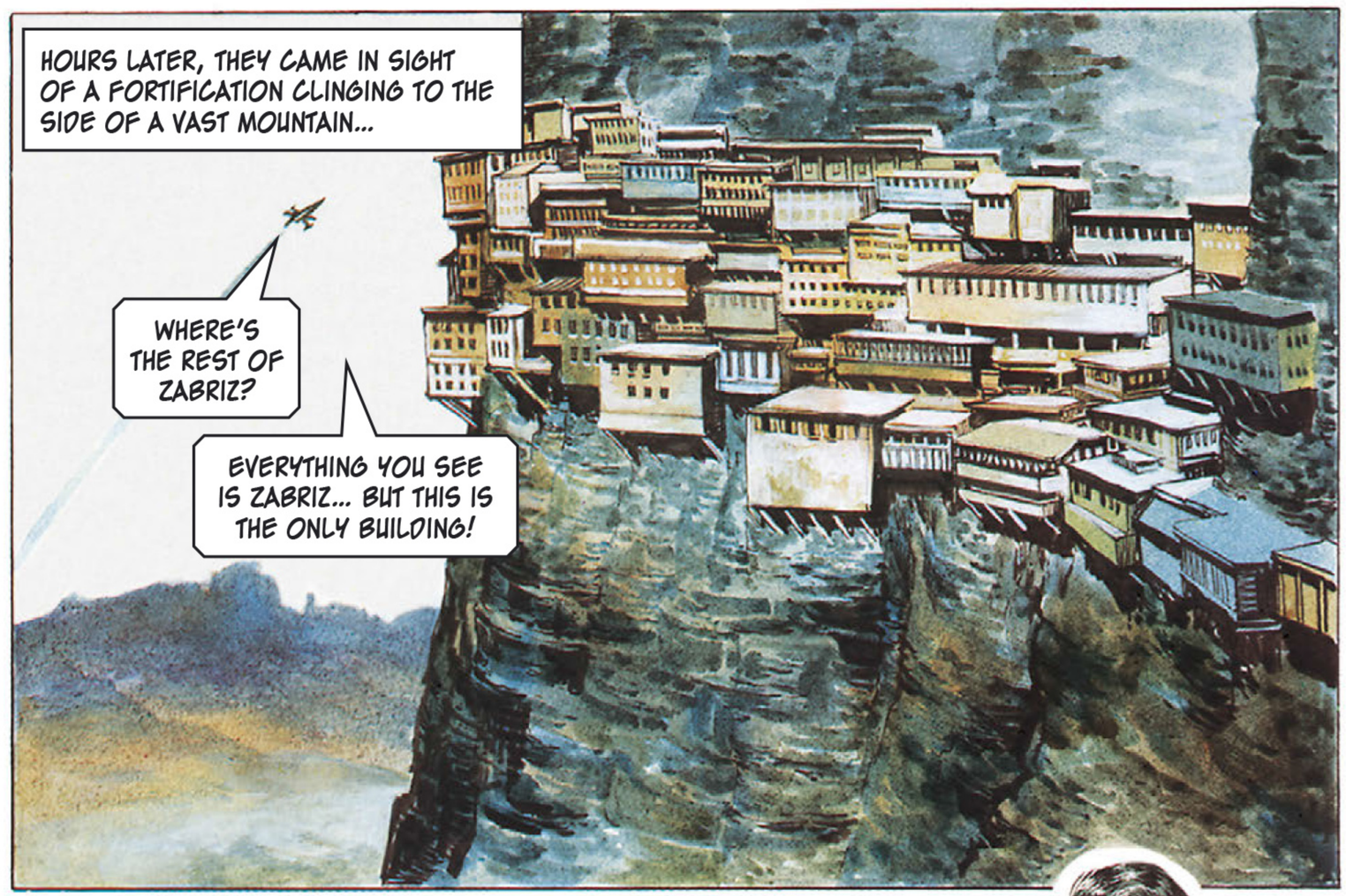
REVOLUTION IN ZABRIZ

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 265 – 273

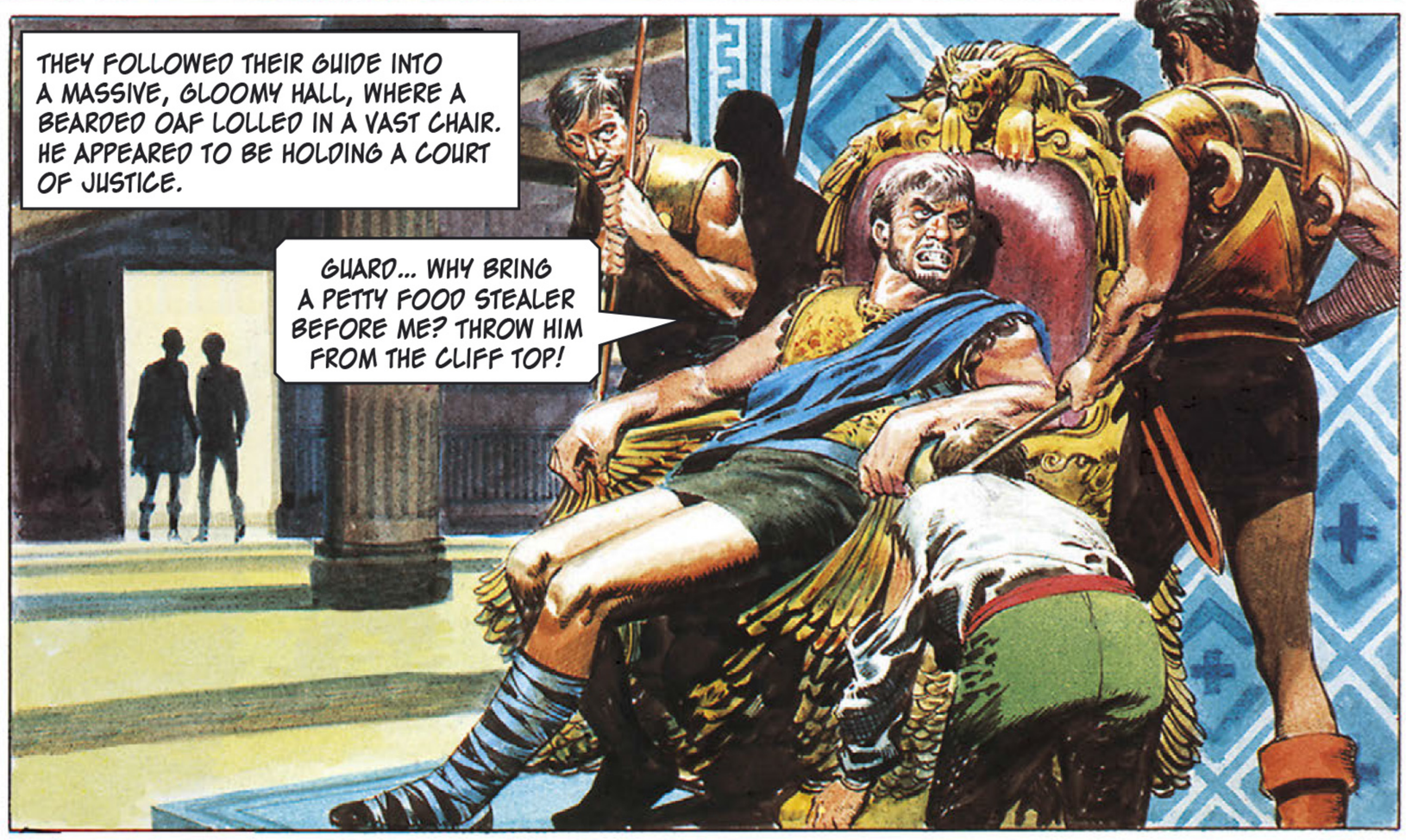
11th February – 8th April 1967

ON THE 700TH DAY OF THE YEAR OF YUSS, TRIGO AND HIS WIFE URSA WERE LED TO THE GREAT OPEN SQUARE OF THE CITY AND THERE TRIGO WAS CROWNED THE FIRST EMPEROR OF TRIGAN.
THE DIADEM OF EMPEROR WAS PLACED ON TRIGO'S HEAD BY HIS OWN BROTHER AND STAUNCH COMRADE, BRAG.
IN A FEW SHORT YEARS YOU HAVE LED YOUR PEOPLE FROM THE BARREN WILDERNESS AND MADE THEM THE MASTERS OF HALF THE PLANET ELEKTON. WE SALUTE YOU, EMPEROR TRIGO THE FIRST.
IT WAS A FEW DAYS AFTER THIS THAT TRIGO'S NEPHEW, JANNO, RECEIVED A SUMMONS TO VISIT THE NEW EMPEROR.
YOU GRACIOUSLY ORDERED ME TO CALL, IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
BY ALL THE STARS, JANNO... LET'S HAVE NONE OF THIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY BUSINESS! I'M YOUR UNCLE TRIGO, REMEMBER? FIND A SEAT AND SIT DOWN.
TRIGO INDICATED THE PILE OF PAPERS ON HIS DESK AND FROWNED RUEFULLY...
PAPER WORK! MORE TROUBLE TO ME THAN FIGHTING THE LOKANS! DO YOU REALISE, YOUNG JANNO, THAT IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO ME AND YOUR FATHER, YOU WOULD BE THE NEXT EMPEROR OF TRIGAN?
TRIGO CROSSED OVER TO A GLOBE REPRESENTING THE PLANET ELEKTON.
IT'S HIGH TIME YOU LEARNED THE ART OF RULING, MY LAD. AND I PROPOSE TO START YOU IN A SMALL WAY. HAVE YOU HEARD OF OUR COLONY OF ZABRIZ?
YES, UNCLE. THAT'S A DESOLATE SPOT AT THE OTHER SIDE OF ELEKTON. THE PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ ARE OUR SUBJECTS AND THEY MINE METAL ORE.
ZABRIZ IS A LONG WAY FROM TRIGAN AND THINGS ARE GOING BADLY THERE. THE MAN IN CHARGE IS A TRIGAN OFFICER NAMED AKKAN. YOU WILL GO TO ZABRIZ ARMED WITH FULL AUTHORITY FROM ME TO PUT THE COLONY IN ORDER... IF NECESSARY YOU WILL DISMISS AKKAN! UNDERSTOOD?
NEXT MORNING, JANNO TOOK OFF IN AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT FOR ZABRIZ. WITH HIM HE TOOK HIS BEST FRIEND AND COMRADE KEREN...
SET COURSE FOR ZABRIZ, KEREN!


THEY FLEW ACROSS THE FACE OF THE PLANET... OVER THE JUNGLES OF DAVELI, WHICH WAS KEREN'S HOMELAND... OVER THE MOUNTAIN WASTES OF LOKA...
MY UNCLE WAS RIGHT... IT'S A LONG WAY FROM TRIGAN CITY TO ZABRIZ!


HOURS LATER, THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF A FORTIFICATION CLINGING TO THE SIDE OF A VAST MOUNTAIN...
WHERE'S THE REST OF ZABRIZ?
EVERYTHING YOU SEE IS ZABRIZ... BUT THIS IS THE ONLY BUILDING!

THEY CLIMBED OUT OF THE CRAFT... TO BE GREETED BY A SURLY GUARD IN UNKEMPT UNIFORM WHO JERKED HIS THUMB TOWARDS THE BUILDING.
WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU... YOU'D BETTER COME ALONG AND SEE AKKAN.


THEY FOLLOWED THEIR GUIDE INTO A MASSIVE, GLOOMY HALL, WHERE A BEARDED OAF LOLLED IN A VAST CHAIR. HE APPEARED TO BE HOLDING A COURT OF JUSTICE.
GUARD... WHY BRING A PETTY FOOD STEALER BEFORE ME? THROW HIM FROM THE CLIFF TOP!

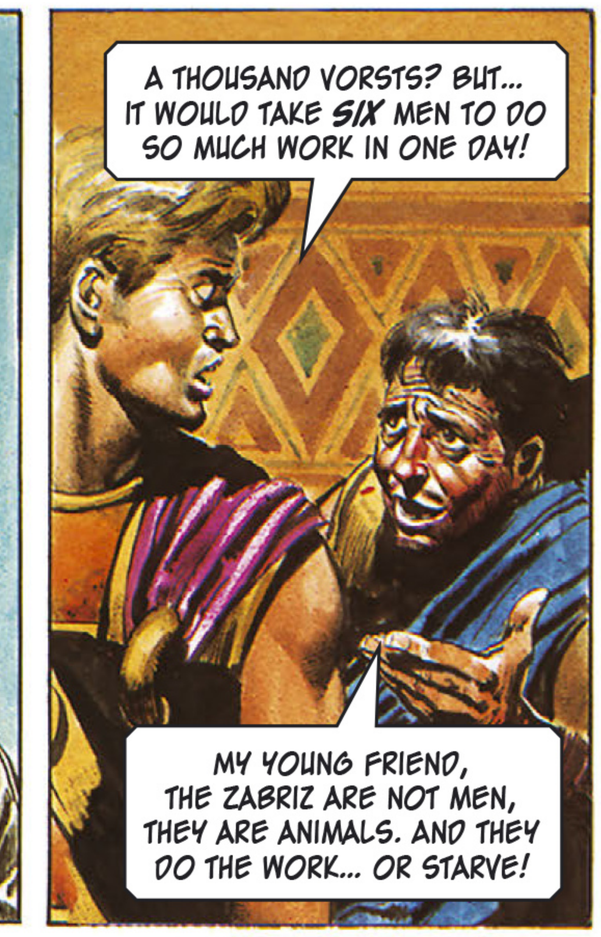
AND THEN... JANNO'S CLEAR YOUNG VOICE RANG OUT!
YOU WILL DO NO SUCH THING!
WHAT'S THIS?

A SNEER SPREAD OVER AKKAN'S UNSAVOURY FACE.
IS THIS HOW YOU ADMINISTER TRIGAN JUSTICE IN ZABRIZ?
WELL... YOU MUST BE THE BRIGHT YOUNG SPRIG THEY'VE SENT FROM TRIGAN CITY TO TEACH ME MY JOB OF HOW TO HANDLE THE ZABRIZ SLAVES!

JANNO STARED AT HIM UNBELIEVINGLY.
SLAVES? BUT THERE IS NO SLAVERY IN THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
NOT IN TRIGAN CITY PERHAPS... BUT WE'RE A LONG WAY FROM THE CITY, MY BRIGHT YOUNG FELLOW... AND I MAKE THE LAWS HERE!

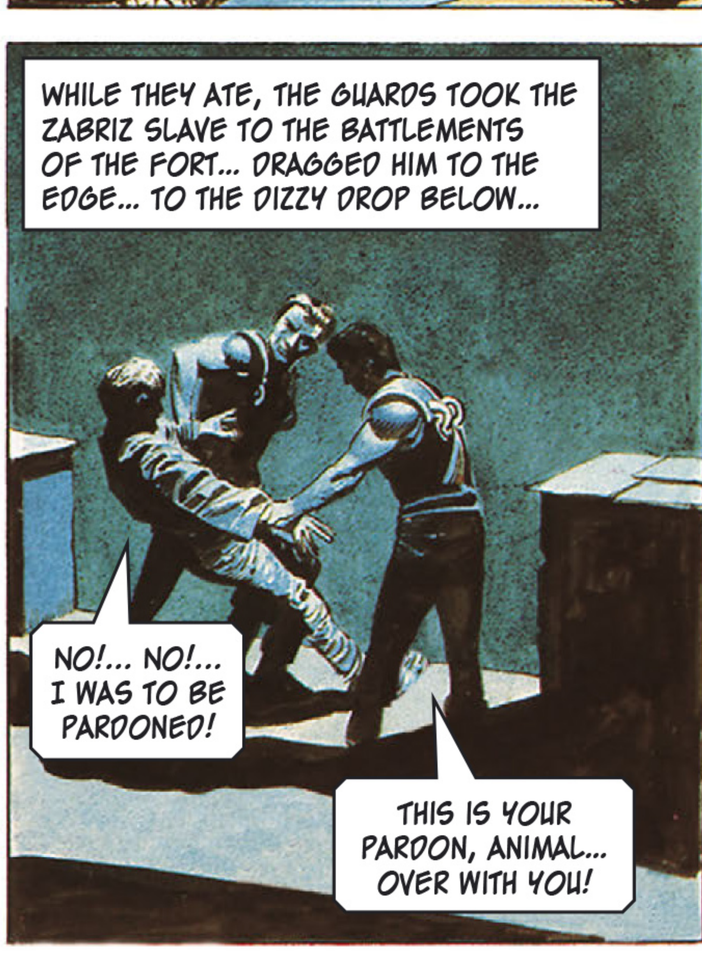
JANNO SQUARED HIS SHOULDERS AND STARED COLDLY AT THE SNEERING AKKAN.
I DEMAND THAT MAN BE GIVEN TRUE TRIGAN JUSTICE!
ALL RIGHT, YOUNG FELLOW... ANYTHING TO HUMOUR YOU. PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO QUESTION THE ANIMAL YOURSELF?

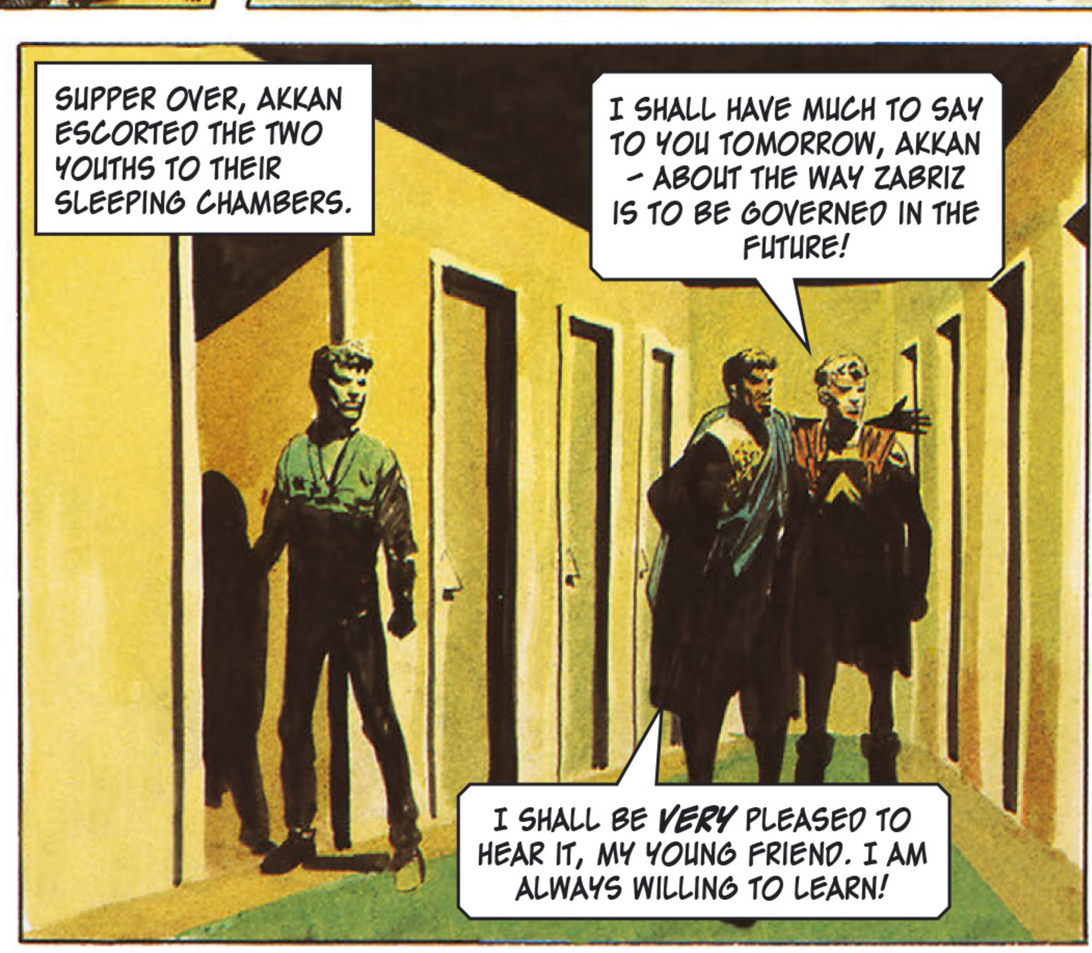
GENTLY, JANNO QUESTIONED THE TERRIFIED ZABRIZ SLAVE.
NOW... DID YOU STEAL FOOD?
YES, SIR... BUT I WAS STARVING. THE GUARDS STOPPED MY FOOD FOR THREE DAYS BECAUSE I FAILED TO DIG OUT MY DAILY STINT OF METAL ORE... A THOUSAND VORSTS IN WEIGHT.

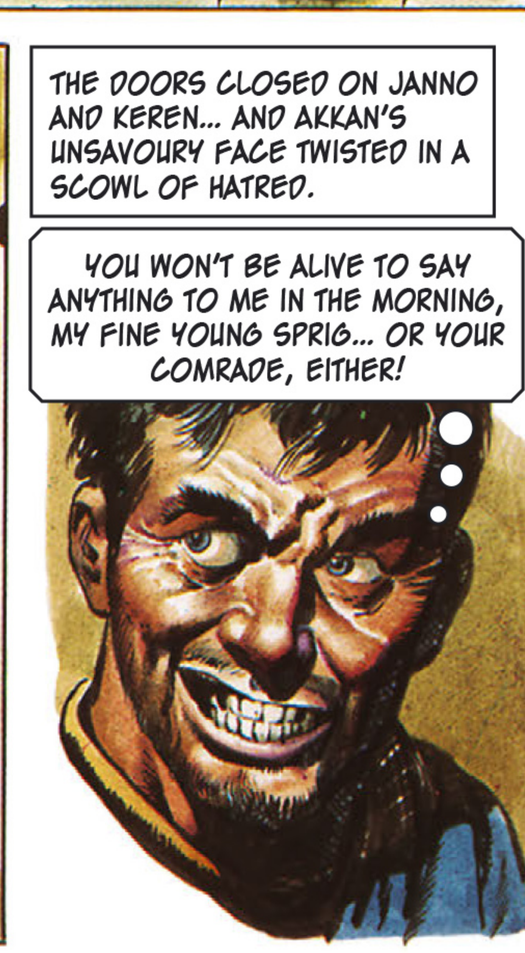

A THOUSAND VORSTS? BUT... IT WOULD TAKE SIX MEN TO DO SO MUCH WORK IN ONE DAY!
MY YOUNG FRIEND, THE ZABRIZ ARE NOT MEN, THEY ARE ANIMALS. AND THEY DO THE WORK... OR STARVE!

I DEMAND THAT THIS MAN BE PARDONED!
VERY WELL. IT'S TIME FOR SUPPER AND I'M IN NO MOOD TO ARGUE...
...SEE TO IT, GUARDS!

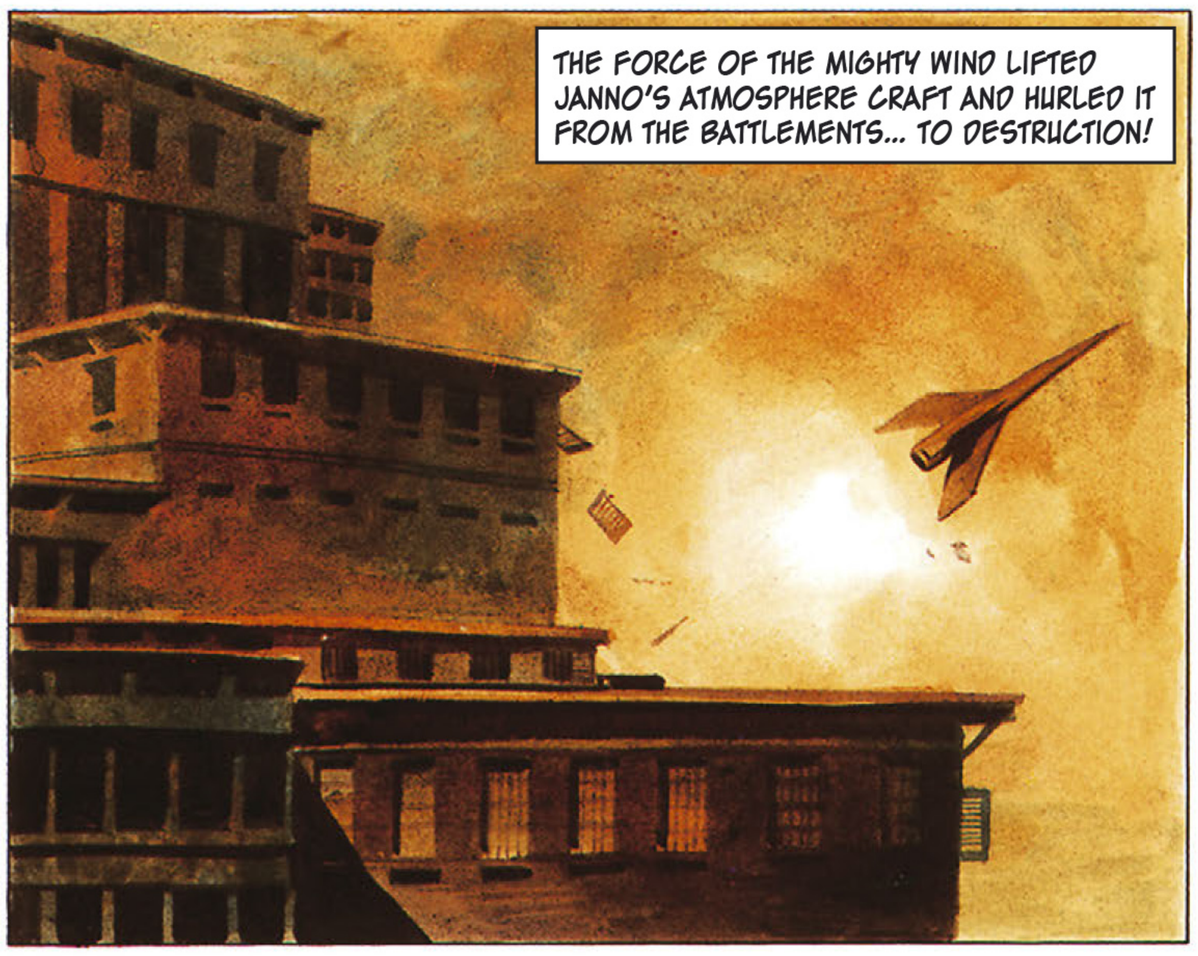
AKKAN LED JANNO AND KEREN INTO A VAST DINING HALL, WHERE A LARGE TABLE GROANED UNDER THE WEIGHT OF FINE FOODS.
I NOTICE THAT YOU DON'T STARVE, AKKAN!
I DON'T DIG OUT A THOUSAND VORSTS OF ORE A DAY, EITHER. BUT THEN... I'M THE LORD AND MASTER OF ZABRIZ!


WHILE THEY ATE, THE GUARDS TOOK THE ZABRIZ SLAVE TO THE BATTLEMENTS OF THE FORT... DRAGGED HIM TO THE EDGE... TO THE DIZZY DROP BELOW...
NO!... NO!... I WAS TO BE PARDONED!
THIS IS YOUR PARDON, ANIMAL... OVER WITH YOU!


SUPPER OVER, AKKAN ESCORTED THE TWO YOUTHS TO THEIR SLEEPING CHAMBERS.
I SHALL HAVE MUCH TO SAY TO YOU TOMORROW, AKKAN – ABOUT THE WAY ZABRIZ IS TO BE GOVERNED IN THE FUTURE!
I SHALL BE VERY PLEASED TO HEAR IT, MY YOUNG FRIEND. I AM ALWAYS WILLING TO LEARN!

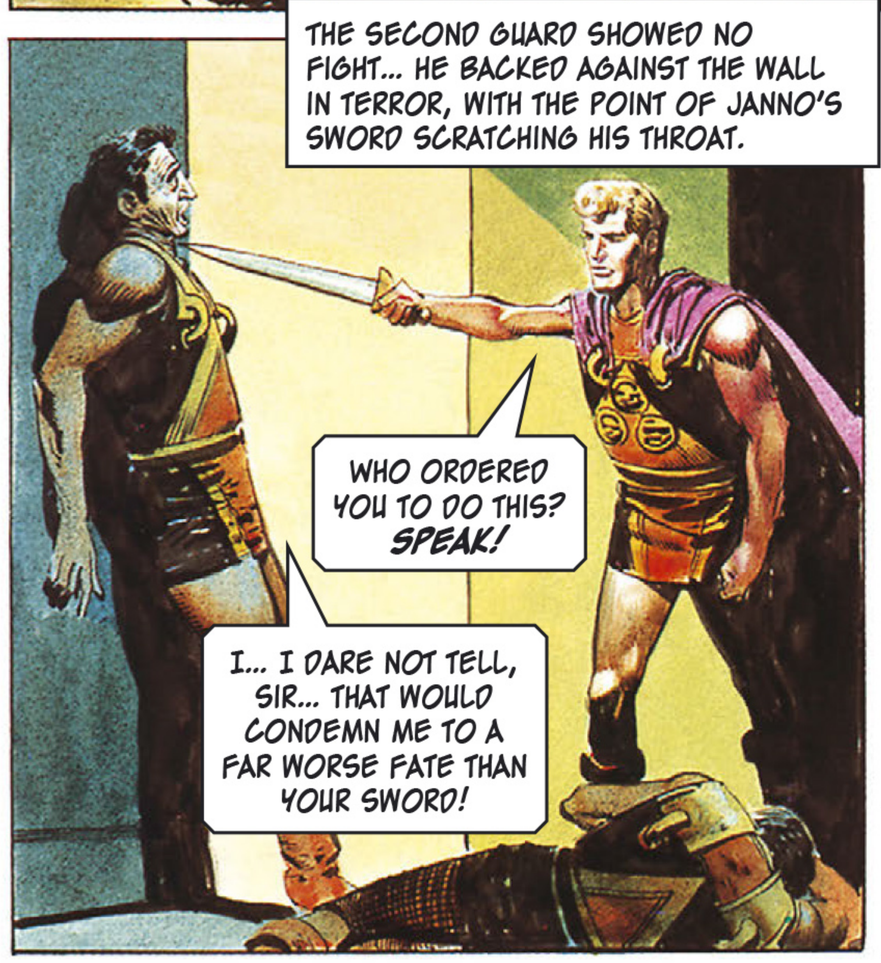

THE DOORS CLOSED ON JANNO AND KEREN... AND AKKAN'S UNSAVOURY FACE TWISTED IN A SCOWL OF HATRED.
YOU WON'T BE ALIVE TO SAY ANYTHING TO ME IN THE MORNING, MY FINE YOUNG SPRIG... OR YOUR COMRADE, EITHER!

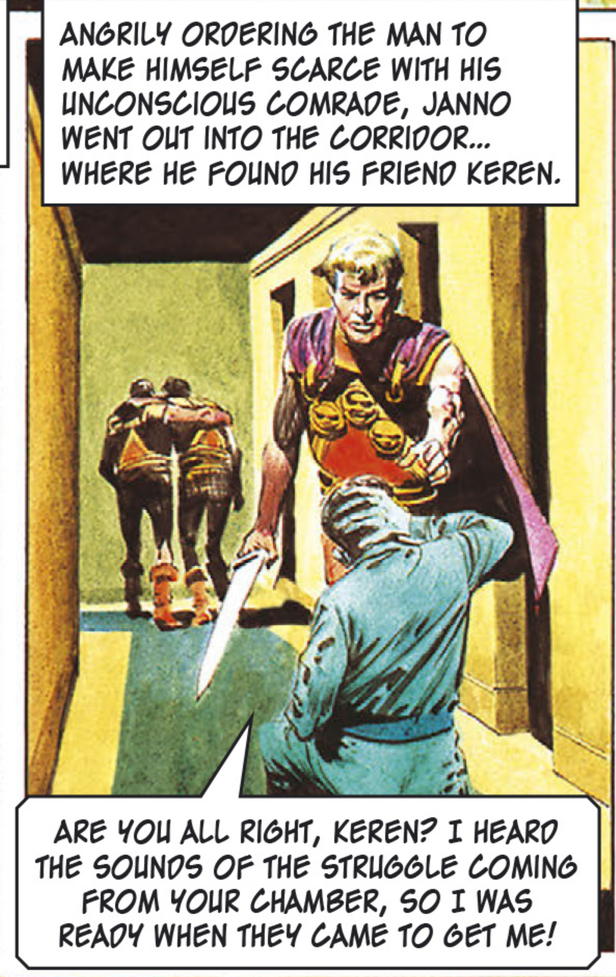
THAT NIGHT, A GREAT STORM BLEW UP FROM THE PLAIN BELOW THE MOUNTAINS, LASHING THE FORTRESS WITH BLINDING SAND.

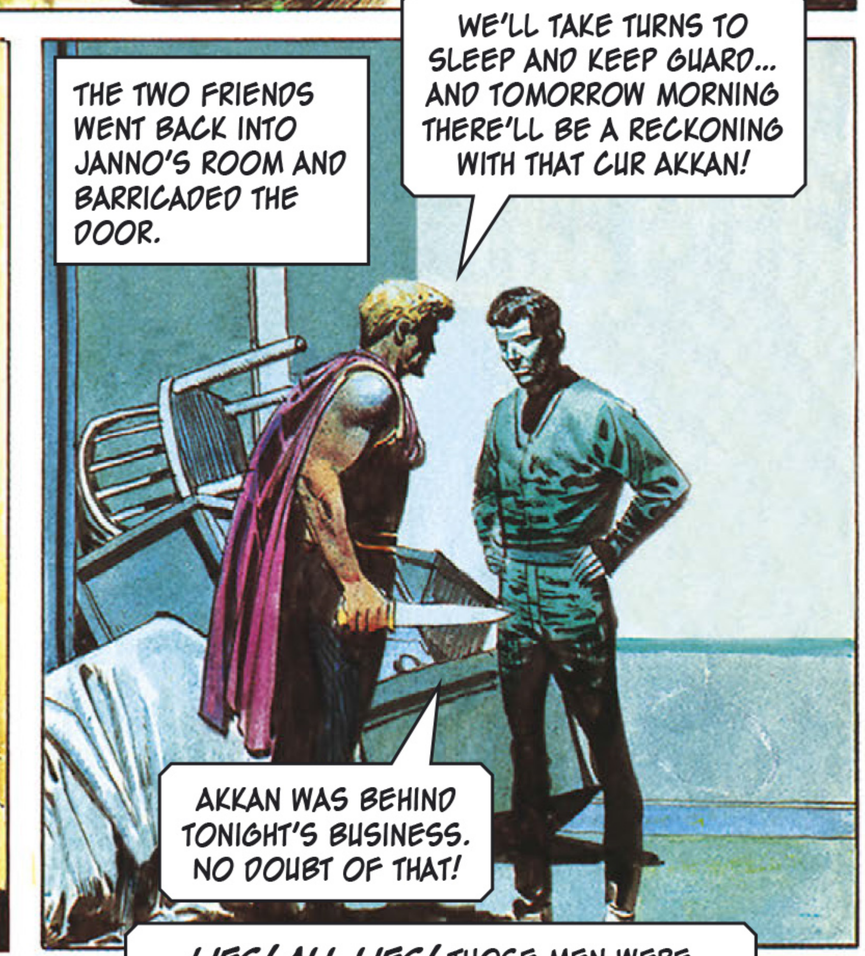


THE FIRST GUARD CREPT INTO JANNO'S CHAMBER... ALL UNAWARE OF JANNO HIDING BEHIND THE DOOR!

TOO LATE, THE MAN SAW THAT THE 'FIGURE' IN THE BED WAS ONLY A PILE OF FURS... NEXT INSTANT THE FLAT OF JANNO'S BLADE LAID HIM LOW!


THE SECOND GUARD SHOWED NO FIGHT... HE BACKED AGAINST THE WALL IN TERROR, WITH THE POINT OF JANNO'S SWORD SCRATCHING HIS THROAT.
WHO ORDERED YOU TO DO THIS? SPEAK!
I... I DARE NOT TELL, SIR... THAT WOULD CONDEMN ME TO A FAR WORSE FATE THAN YOUR SWORD!


ANGRILY ORDERING THE MAN TO MAKE HIMSELF SCARCE WITH HIS UNCONSCIOUS COMRADE, JANNO WENT OUT INTO THE CORRIDOR... WHERE HE FOUND HIS FRIEND KEREN.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, KEREN? I HEARD THE SOUNDS OF THE STRUGGLE COMING FROM YOUR CHAMBER, SO I WAS READY WHEN THEY CAME TO GET ME!


THE TWO FRIENDS WENT BACK INTO JANNO'S ROOM AND BARRICADED THE DOOR.
WE'LL TAKE TURNS TO SLEEP AND KEEP GUARD... AND TOMORROW MORNING THERE'LL BE A RECKONING WITH THAT CUR AKKAN!
AKKAN WAS BEHIND TONIGHT'S BUSINESS. NO DOUBT OF THAT!

WHEN THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON ROSE NEXT MORNING, JANNO AND KEREN STRODE DOWN INTO THE GREAT HALL, WHERE AKKAN WAS GORGING HIMSELF. HE GREETED THEM WITH A BROAD, MOCKING GRIN.
SIT DOWN, MY YOUNG FRIENDS... HELP YOURSELVES TO SOME FOOD!
WE HAVE MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS TO DISCUSS THAN FOOD, AKKAN!

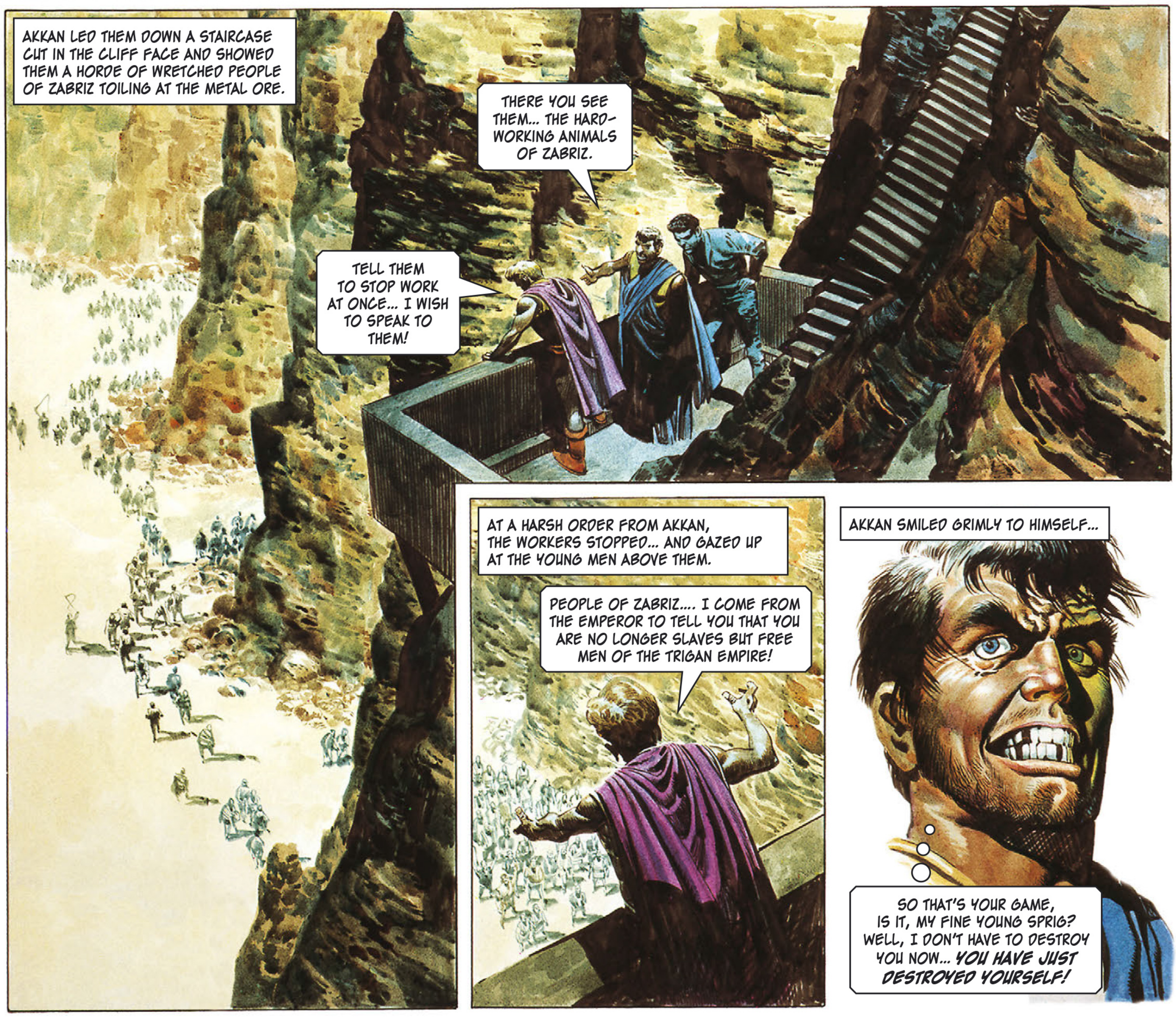
AKKAN TWISTED HIS UNSAVOURY FACE INTO AN EXPRESSION OF INNOCENCE.
AH! YOU MEAN THE UNFORTUNATE BUSINESS LAST NIGHT? THOSE RASCALLY GUARDS WHO ATTACKED YOU? YOU KNOW, SOME OF THOSE WRETCHES WOULD CUT THEIR OWN BROTHER'S THROAT FOR THE CONTENTS OF HIS PURSE. THEY HAVE ALREADY BEEN EXECUTED, OF COURSE!

LIES! ALL LIES! THOSE MEN WERE OBEYING YOUR ORDERS! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, AKKAN... AND I'M SENDING A RADIO MESSAGE TO TRIGAN CITY FOR A FORCE TO COME AND TAKE OVER HERE!

THE RASCALLY AKKAN SOON RECOVERED FROM THE SHOCK... HE SMILED CRAFTILY.
THERE IS NO RADIO, I'M AFRAID... IT'S THE SANDSTORMS OF ZABRIZ, YOU SEE? THE SAND GETS INTO EVERY PIECE OF MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT AND RUINS IT!
I HAVE A RADIO IN MY ATMOSPHERE CRAFT... WE'LL SEE IF THE SAND HAS RUINED THAT!

THEN AKKAN DELIVERED THE MASTER STROKE!
OH, DEAR! DID NOBODY TELL YOU? YOUR ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WAS DRIVEN OVER THE BATTLEMENTS BY LAST NIGHT'S STORM... YOU ARE BOTH STRANDED HERE, I'M AFRAID!

KNOWING THAT THEY WERE NOW BOTH CUT OFF FROM TRIGAN CITY AND IN INSTANT PERIL OF THEIR LIVES, JANNO WAS STILL DETERMINED TO DO HIS DUTY.
VERY WELL. YOU WILL CONSIDER YOURSELF UNDER OPEN ARREST... AND YOU WILL SHOW ME THE METAL ORE MINES BEING WORKED!
AS YOU ORDER... SIR!


AKKAN LED THEM DOWN A STAIRCASE CUT IN THE CLIFF FACE AND SHOWED THEM A HORDE OF WRETCHED PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ TOILING AT THE METAL ORE.
THERE YOU SEE THEM... THE HARD-WORKING ANIMALS OF ZABRIZ.
TELL THEM TO STOP WORK AT ONCE... I WISH TO SPEAK TO THEM!
AT A HARSH ORDER FROM AKKAN, THE WORKERS STOPPED... AND GAZED UP AT THE YOUNG MEN ABOVE THEM.
PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ.... I COME FROM THE EMPEROR TO TELL YOU THAT YOU ARE NO LONGER SLAVES BUT FREE MEN OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
AKKAN SMILED GRIMLY TO HIMSELF...
SO THAT'S YOUR GAME, IS IT, MY FINE YOUNG SPRIG? WELL, I DON'T HAVE TO DESTROY YOU NOW... YOU HAVE JUST DESTROYED YOURSELF!

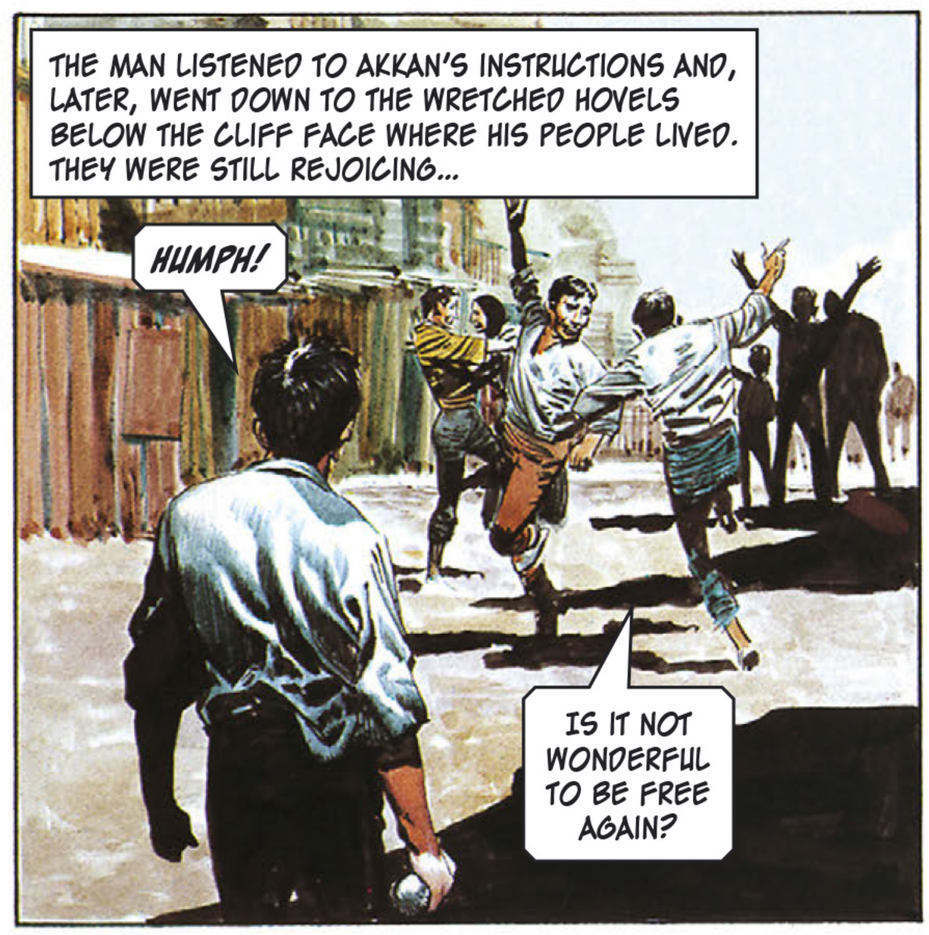
AT FIRST, THE PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ STARED UP, DUMBFOUNDED, TOWARDS THE YOUNG MAN FROM TRIGAN WHO HAD RELEASED THEM FROM THEIR MISERY... AND THEN THEY BURST INTO LOUD CRIES OF JOY...
FREE! WE'RE FREE! LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR TRIGO! LONG LIVE THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

FLUSHED WITH SUCCESS, JANNO TURNED TO THE RASCALLY AKKAN.
AND THAT IS HOW TO RULE THE SUBJECTS OF THE EMPIRE!
HOW GLAD I AM – SIR – THAT YOU CAME HERE TO SHOW ME HOW TO DO MY JOB!

BUT LATER, AKKAN SENT FOR ONE OF THE ZABRIZ MEN...
DON'T LOOK SO FEARFUL, MY FRIEND... I HAVE A SMALL PRESENT FOR YOU...

HE TOSSED A PURSE CARELESSLY ACROSS THE TABLE...
MONEY! MORE MONEY THAN I HAVE EVER SEEN! BUT... FOR ME?

ALL YOURS, MY FRIEND. PICK IT UP... AND NOW THERE IS SOMETHING I WANT YOU TO DO IN RETURN!


THE MAN LISTENED TO AKKAN'S INSTRUCTIONS AND, LATER, WENT DOWN TO THE WRETCHED HOVELS BELOW THE CLIFF FACE WHERE HIS PEOPLE LIVED. THEY WERE STILL REJOICING...
HUMPH!
IS IT NOT WONDERFUL TO BE FREE AGAIN?

THE MAN HAD LEARNED HIS INSTRUCTIONS THOROUGHLY...
FREE? HAS OUR FREEDOM BROUGHT US ANY FOOD? YOU FOOLS! DON'T YOU SEE THOSE TRIGANS HAVE JUST TRICKED US? WE ARE NOW FREE TO STARVE!

A GROWL OF ANGRY AGREEMENT GREETED HIS WORDS.
LET US ATTACK THE CITADEL WHERE THOSE TRIGANS LIVE LIKE KINGS! SMASH IT TO PIECES! TAKE EVERYTHING!

THEIR JOY TURNED TO RAGE, THE HUNGRY PEOPLE SWARMED UP THE STEPS TO THE CITADEL, BRUSHING ASIDE THE GUARDS WHO TRIED TO BAR THEIR WAY..

DEATH TO THE TRIGANS!

THEN BEGAN AN ORGY OF LOOTING AND DESTRUCTION AS THEY SET FIRE TO EVERYTHING IN SIGHT AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON ALL THE FOOD THEY COULD FIND.

DOWN WITH THE TRIGAN EMPIRE! DESTROY ALL!

JANNO AND KEREN RUSHED OUT ONTO A BALCONY AND SAW THE SMOKE RISING TO THE SKY...

WHAT... WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

THEIR FREEDOM HAS GONE TO THEIR HEADS, MY CLEVER YOUNG FRIEND! AND IT IS ALL YOUR FAULT!

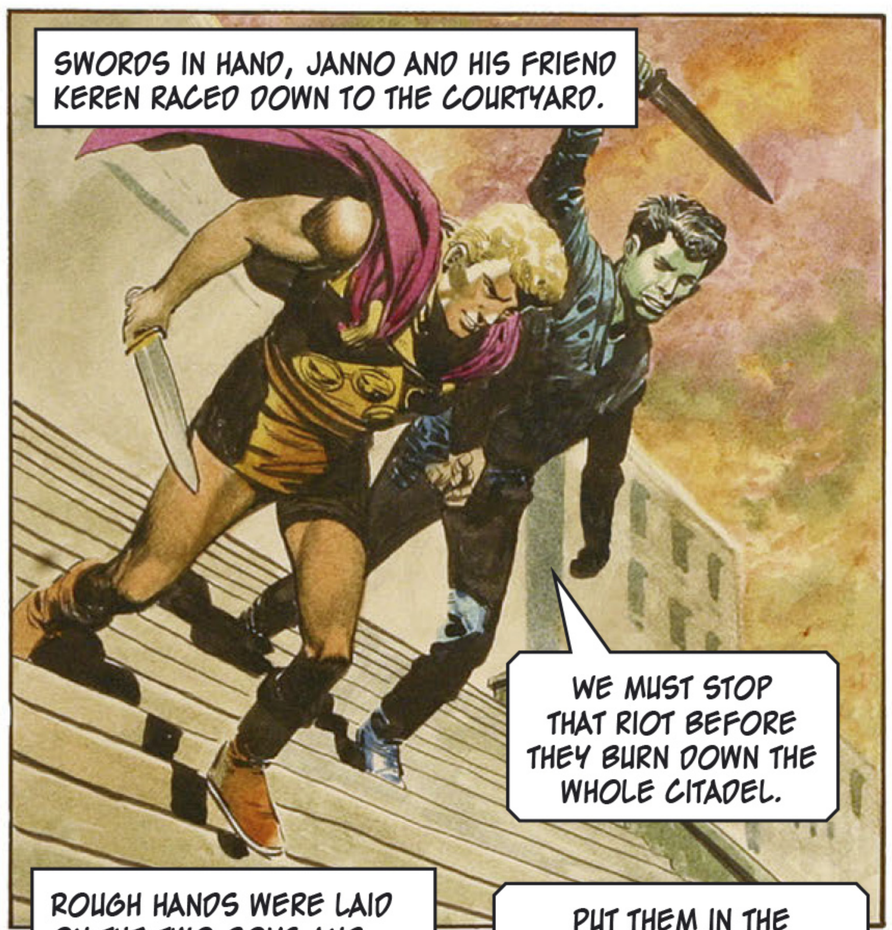
THOUGH AKKAN HAD TOLD JANNO THAT ALL THE RADIOS HAD BEEN PUT OUT OF ACTION, HE HAD ONE FOR HIS OWN USE. SOME TIME LATER, HE SENT A MESSAGE TO TRIGAN CITY...

THIS IS AKKAN, COMMANDER OF ZABRIZ... THANKS TO THE CRIMINAL FOLLY OF JANNO, THE PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ ARE IN REVOLT...

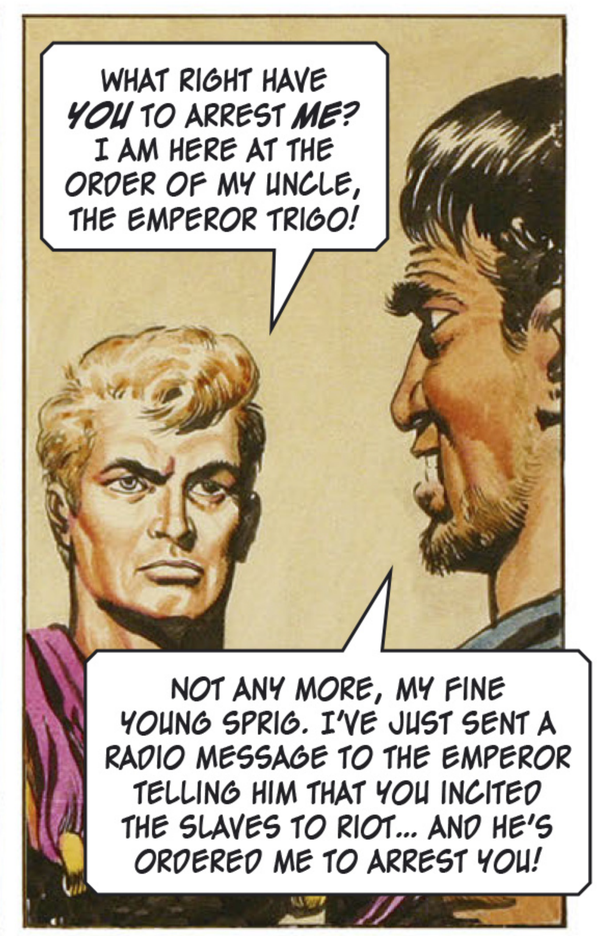
THE NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO TRIGO WHILE HE WAS HUNTING WILD ZARGOT ON THE PLAIN OF VORG.

THE EMPEROR'S FACE DARKENED WITH FURY WHEN HE READ AKKAN'S MESSAGE.

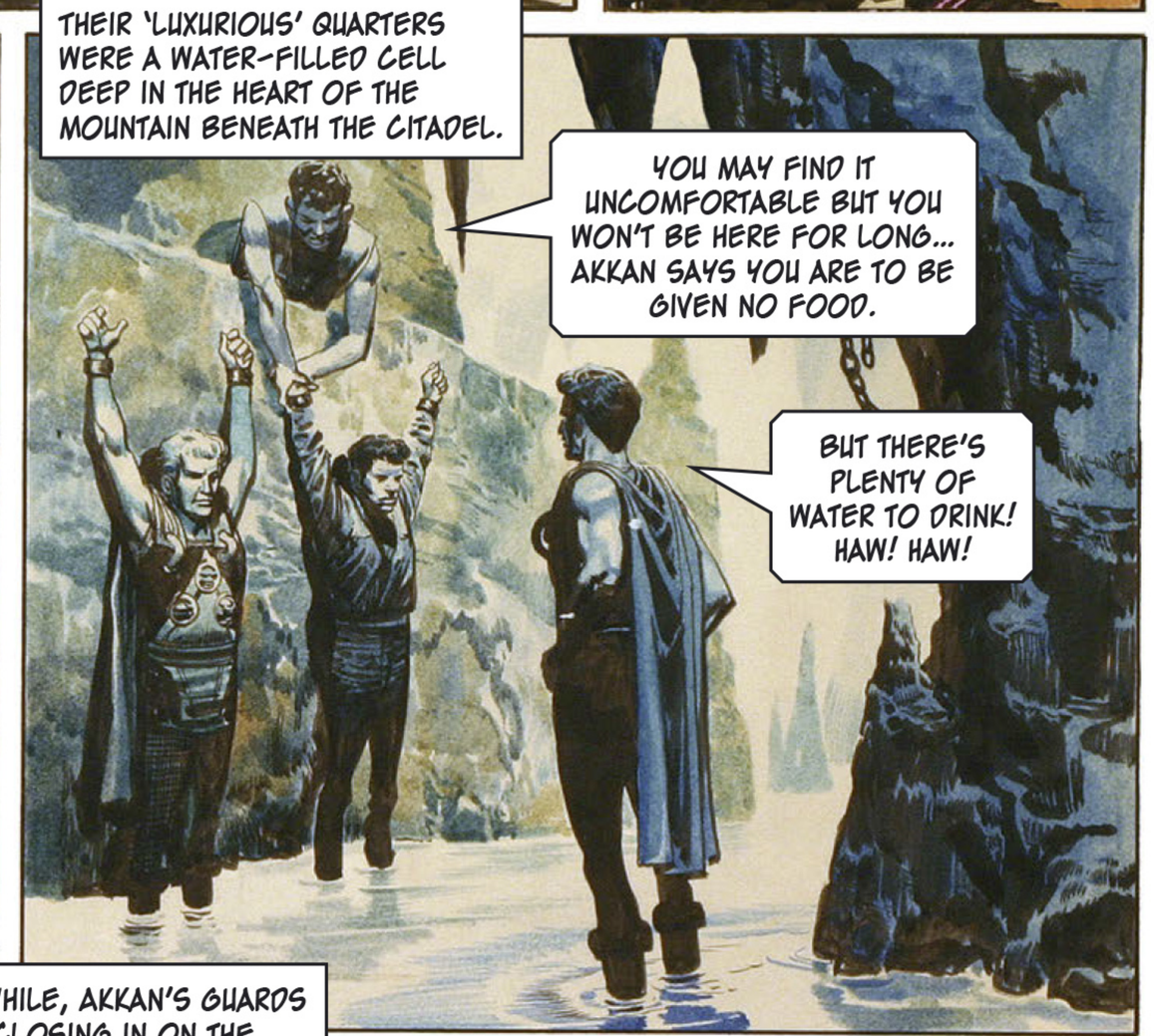
SEND A MESSAGE BACK TO AKKAN... TELL HIM THAT HE HAS MY COMPLETE CONFIDENCE. TELL HIM TO RESTORE ORDER BY ANY MEANS HE SEES FIT... AND TO PUT MY STUPID YOUNG NEPHEW UNDER ARREST!


SWORDS IN HAND, JANNO AND HIS FRIEND KEREN RACED DOWN TO THE COURTYARD.
WE MUST STOP THAT RIOT BEFORE THEY BURN DOWN THE WHOLE CITADEL.

BUT... THEY NEVER REACHED THE COURTYARD!
DROP YOUR SWORDS! YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!
WHAT'S THIS?

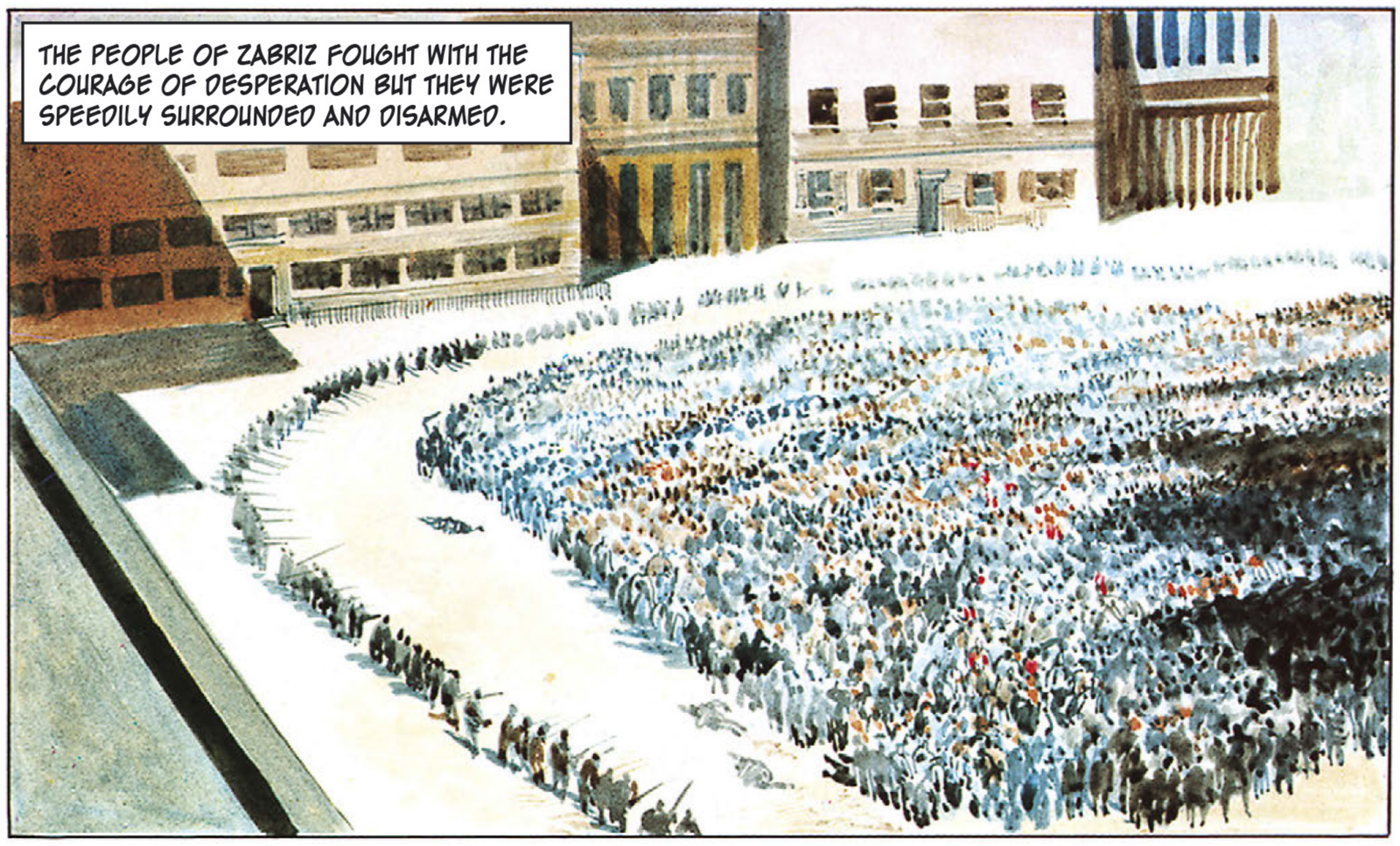

WHAT RIGHT HAVE YOU TO ARREST ME? I AM HERE AT THE ORDER OF MY UNCLE, THE EMPEROR TRIGO!
NOT ANY MORE, MY FINE YOUNG SPRIG. I'VE JUST SENT A RADIO MESSAGE TO THE EMPEROR TELLING HIM THAT YOU INCITED THE SLAVES TO RIOT... AND HE'S ORDERED ME TO ARREST YOU!

ROUGH HANDS WERE LAID ON THE TWO BOYS AND THEY WERE DRAGGED OFF.
PUT THEM IN THE SPECIAL LUXURIOUS QUARTERS RESERVED FOR RELATIVES OF THE EMPEROR... HEH! HEH!

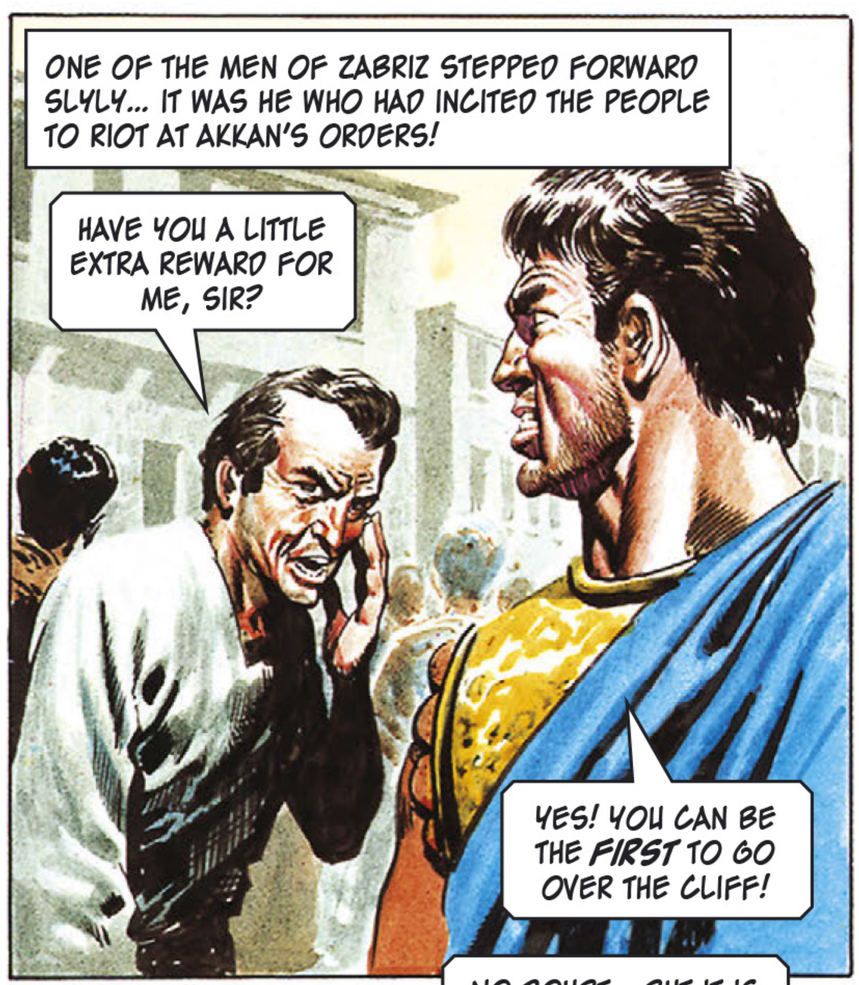

THEIR 'LUXURIOUS' QUARTERS WERE A WATER-FILLED CELL DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN BENEATH THE CITADEL.
YOU MAY FIND IT UNCOMFORTABLE BUT YOU WON'T BE HERE FOR LONG... AKKAN SAYS YOU ARE TO BE GIVEN NO FOOD.
BUT THERE'S PLENTY OF WATER TO DRINK! HAW! HAW!

THE TWO WERE LEFT ALONE WITH THEIR BITTER THOUGHTS.
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
WE ARE FINISHED! NO USE RELYING ON HELP FROM MY UNCLE. HE THINKS I HAVE FAILED HIM...

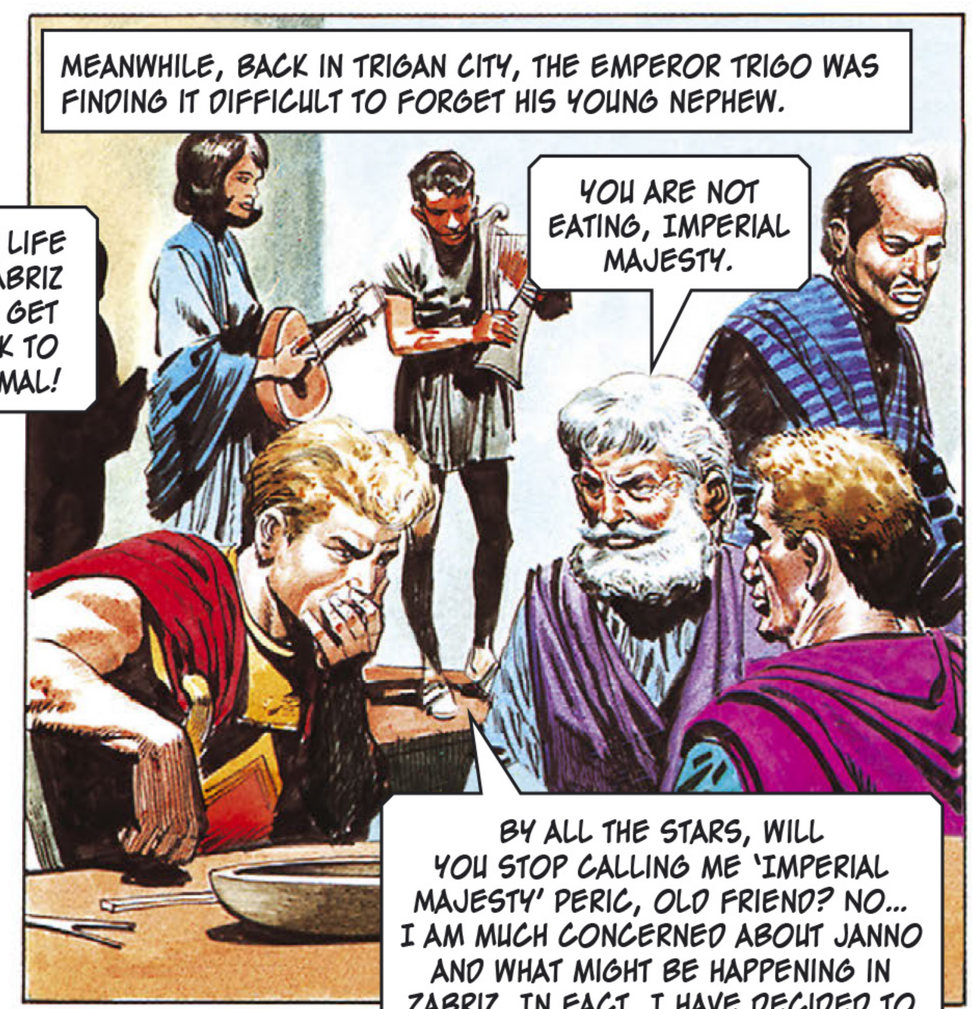
MEANWHILE, AKKAN'S GUARDS WERE CLOSING IN ON THE RIOTING MOB MASSED IN THE COURTYARD.
DEATH TO THE TRIGANS... LONG LIVE FREEDOM!


THE PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ FOUGHT WITH THE COURAGE OF DESPERATION BUT THEY WERE SPEEDILY SURROUNDED AND DISARMED.

THEN AKKAN GAVE A GRIN OF EVIL TRIUMPH.
RIGHT... THROW EVERY TENTH MAN OFF THE CLIFF!

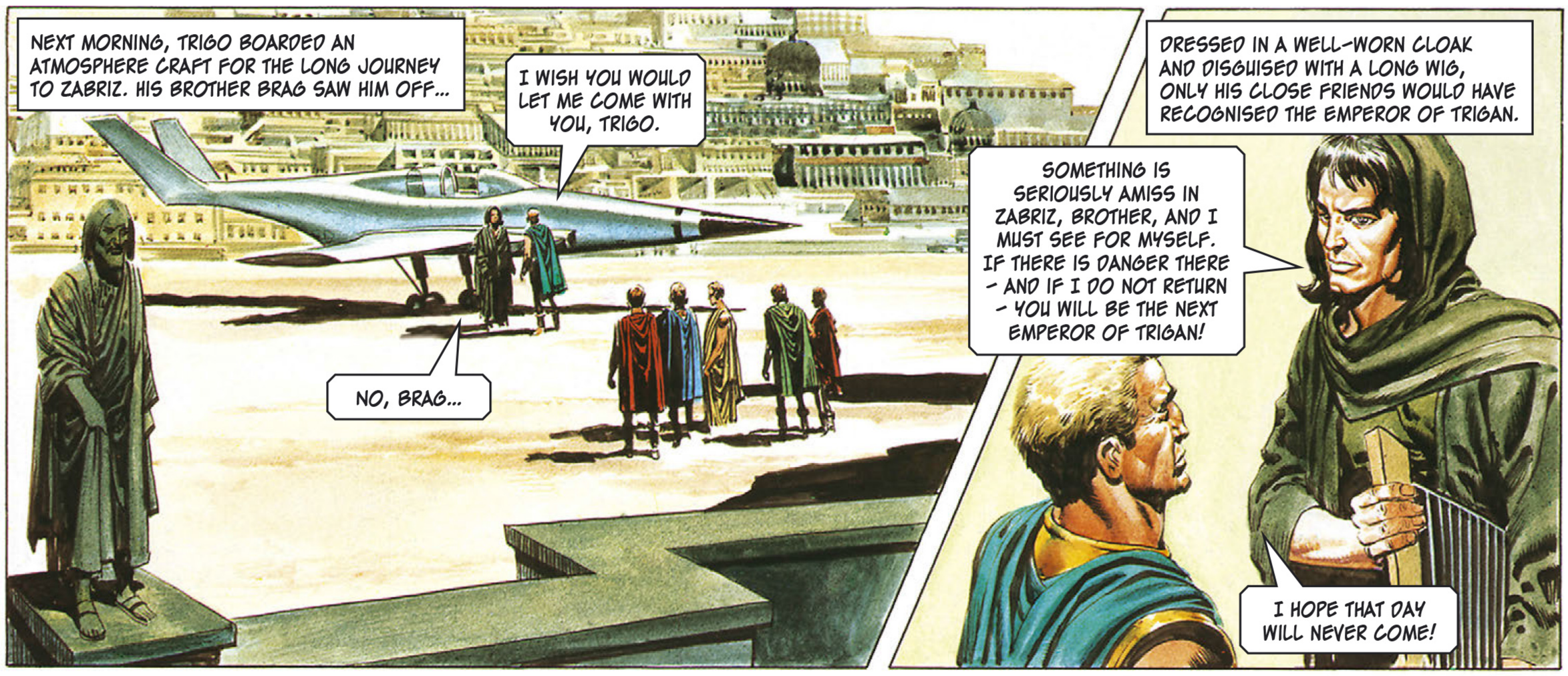

ONE OF THE MEN OF ZABRIZ STEPPED FORWARD SLYLY... IT WAS HE WHO HAD INCITED THE PEOPLE TO RIOT AT AKKAN'S ORDERS!
HAVE YOU A LITTLE EXTRA REWARD FOR ME, SIR?
YES! YOU CAN BE THE *FIRST* TO GO OVER THE CLIFF!

AKKAN HAD GOOD CAUSE FOR TRIUMPH.
NOW LIFE IN ZABRIZ CAN GET BACK TO NORMAL!


MEANWHILE, BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO FORGET HIS YOUNG NEPHEW.
YOU ARE NOT EATING, IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
BY ALL THE STARS, WILL YOU STOP CALLING ME 'IMPERIAL MAJESTY' PERIC, OLD FRIEND? NO... I AM MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT JANNO AND WHAT MIGHT BE HAPPENING IN ZABRIZ. IN FACT, I HAVE DECIDED TO GO THERE AND SEE FOR MYSELF.

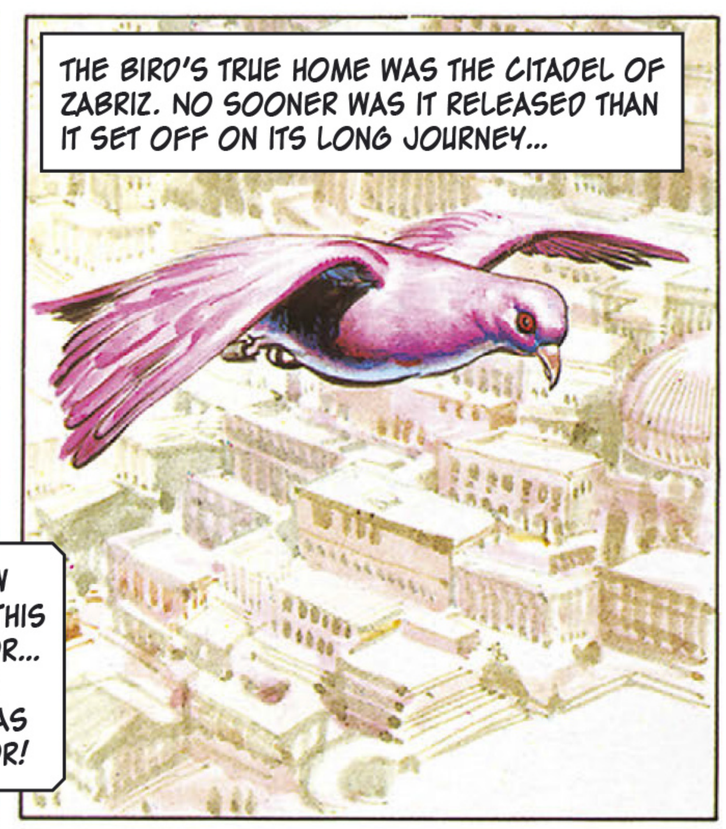
NO DOUBT... BUT IT IS NOT AS EMPEROR THAT I SHALL VISIT THEM!
THE PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ WILL BE GREATLY HONOURED TO RECEIVE A VISIT FROM THEIR EMPEROR.

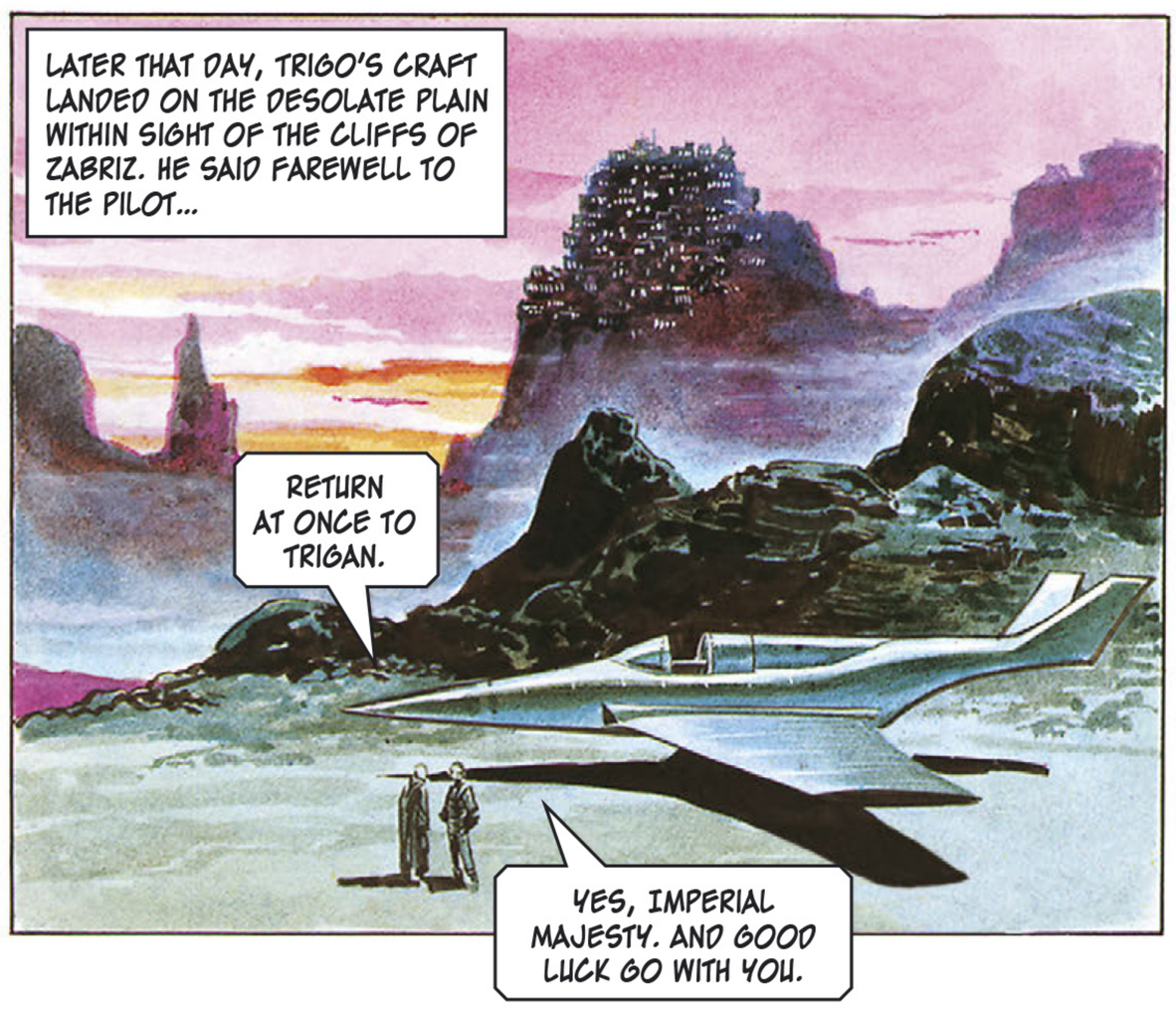
I THINK I WILL GO AS A POOR TRAVELLING MUSICIAN! *SUCH A MAN MIGHT LEARN THINGS THAT WOULD BE HIDDEN FROM THE EMPEROR TRIGO!*

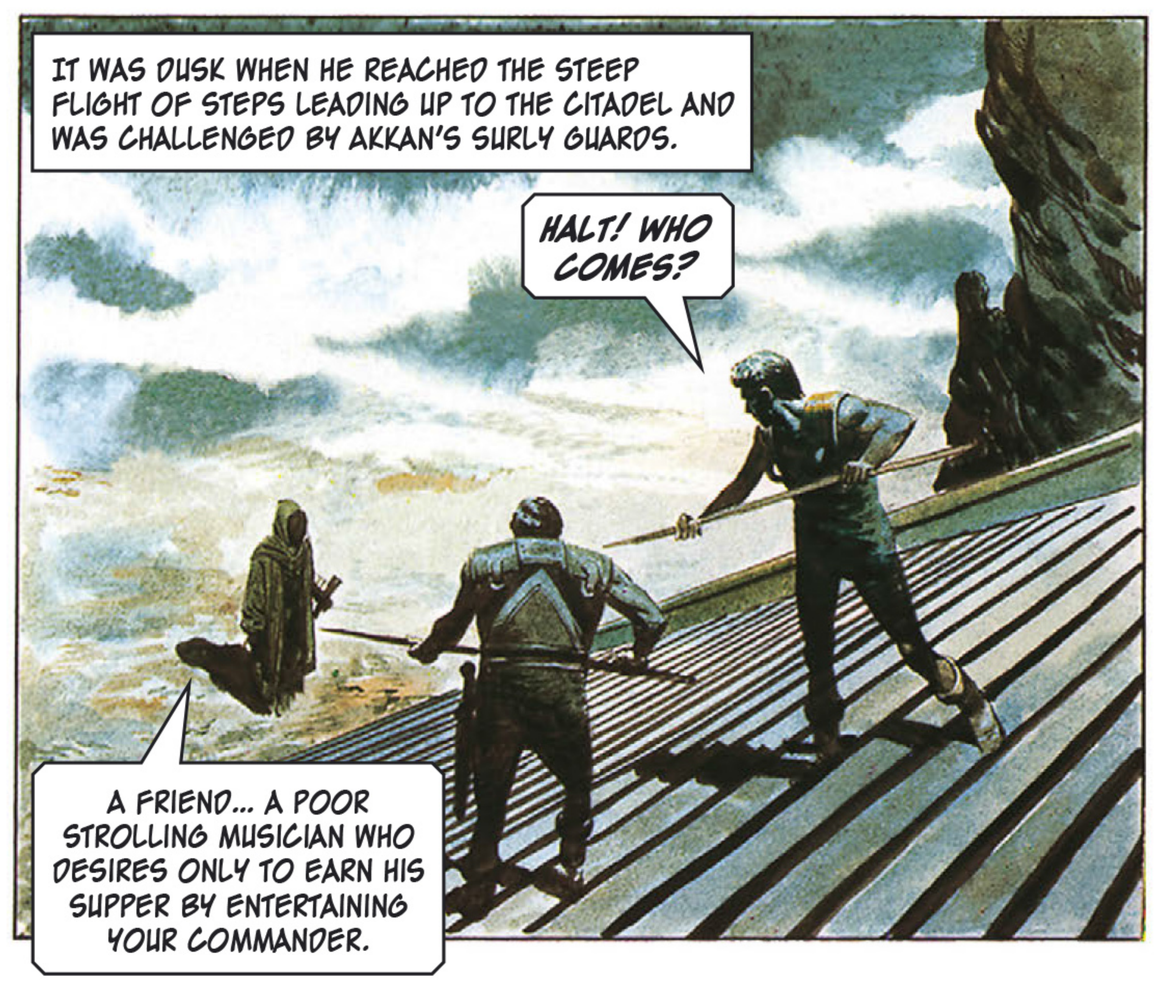

NEXT MORNING, TRIGO BOARDED AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT FOR THE LONG JOURNEY TO ZABRIZ. HIS BROTHER BRAG SAW HIM OFF...
I WISH YOU WOULD LET ME COME WITH YOU, TRIGO.
NO, BRAG...
DRESSED IN A WELL-WORN CLOAK AND DISGUISED WITH A LONG WIG, ONLY HIS CLOSE FRIENDS WOULD HAVE RECOGNISED THE EMPEROR OF TRIGAN.
SOMETHING IS SERIOUSLY AMISS IN ZABRIZ, BROTHER, AND I MUST SEE FOR MYSELF. IF THERE IS DANGER THERE – AND IF I DO NOT RETURN – YOU WILL BE THE NEXT EMPEROR OF TRIGAN!
I HOPE THAT DAY WILL NEVER COME!

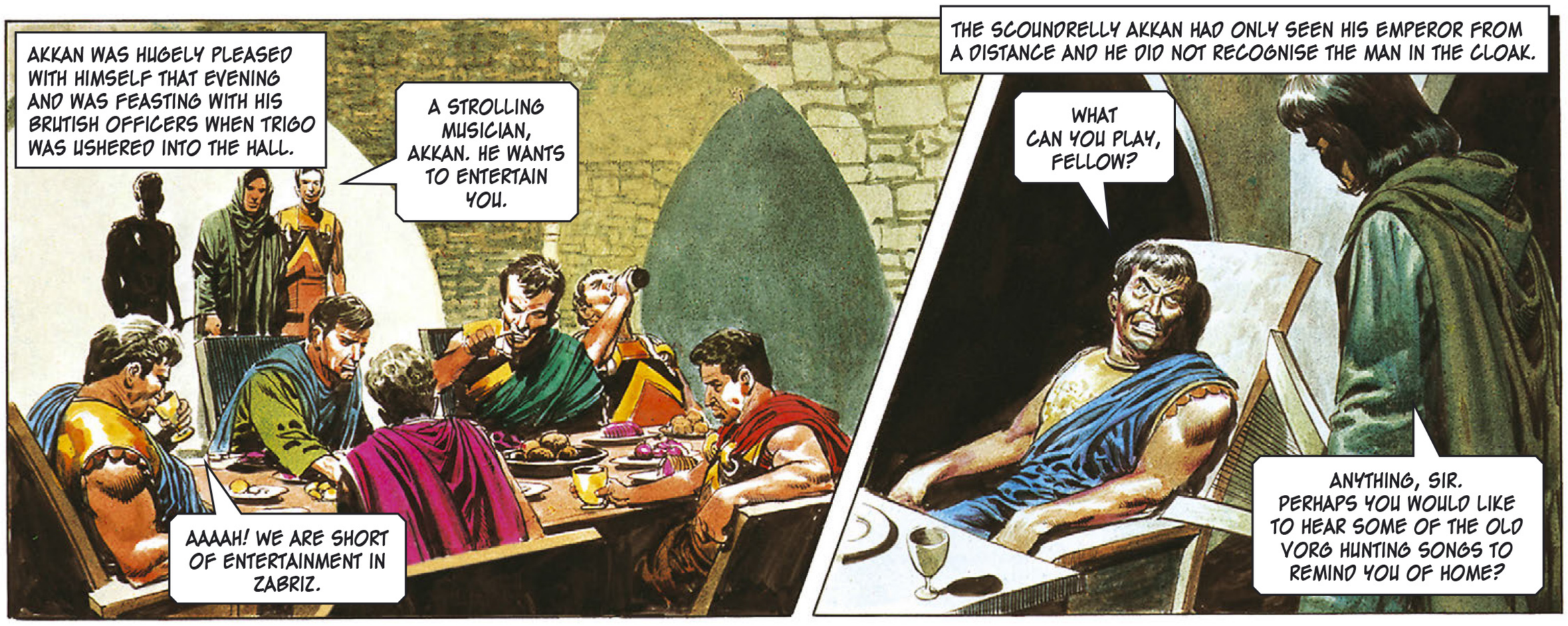
AS THE CRAFT SOARED UP INTO THE SKY, ONE OF THE OFFICERS WALKED SWIFTLY AWAY.
I WILL SEND THIS NEWS AT ONCE TO MY COUSIN, AKKAN!

A SHORT WHILE AFTER, THE OFFICER WAS SLIPPING A SCRIBBLED NOTE INTO A MESSAGE CONTAINER ATTACHED TO THE LEG OF A TAME WEDON BIRD.
AKKAN WILL KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS DISGUISED EMPEROR... THIS IS JUST THE OPPORTUNITY HE HAS BEEN LOOKING FOR!


THE BIRD'S TRUE HOME WAS THE CITADEL OF ZABRIZ. NO SOONER WAS IT RELEASED THAN IT SET OFF ON ITS LONG JOURNEY...

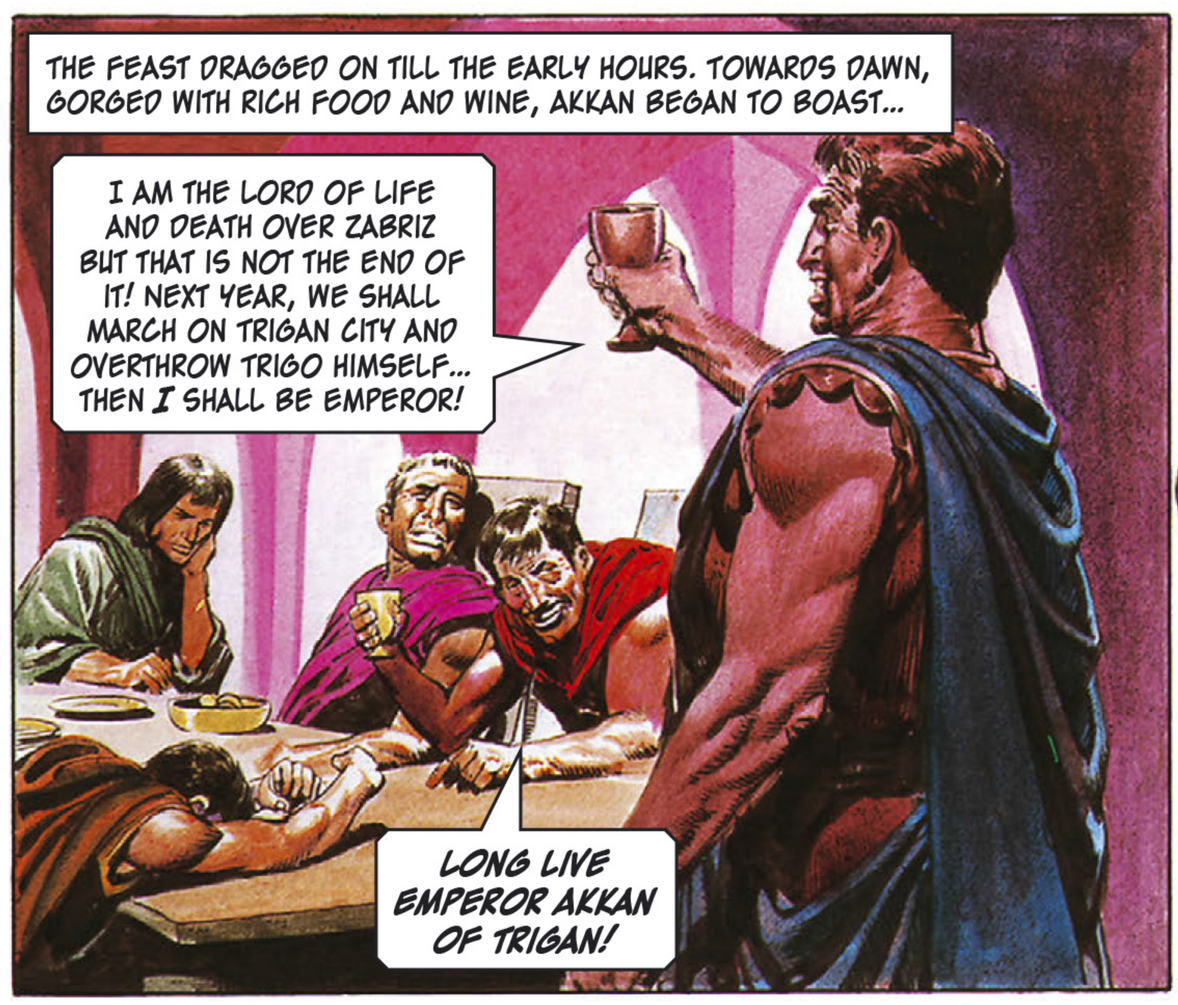

LATER THAT DAY, TRIGO'S CRAFT LANDED ON THE DESOLATE PLAIN WITHIN SIGHT OF THE CLIFFS OF ZABRIZ. HE SAID FAREWELL TO THE PILOT...
RETURN AT ONCE TO TRIGAN.
YES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. AND GOOD LUCK GO WITH YOU.


IT WAS DUSK WHEN HE REACHED THE STEEP FLIGHT OF STEPS LEADING UP TO THE CITADEL AND WAS CHALLENGED BY AKKAN'S SURLY GUARDS.
HALT! WHO COMES?
A FRIEND... A POOR STROLLING MUSICIAN WHO DESIRES ONLY TO EARN HIS SUPPER BY ENTERTAINING YOUR COMMANDER.


AKKAN WAS HUGELY PLEASED WITH HIMSELF THAT EVENING AND WAS FEASTING WITH HIS BRUTISH OFFICERS WHEN TRIGO WAS USHERED INTO THE HALL.
A STROLLING MUSICIAN, AKKAN. HE WANTS TO ENTERTAIN YOU.
AAAAH! WE ARE SHORT OF ENTERTAINMENT IN ZABRIZ.
THE SCOUNDRELLY AKKAN HAD ONLY SEEN HIS EMPEROR FROM A DISTANCE AND HE DID NOT RECOGNISE THE MAN IN THE CLOAK.
WHAT CAN YOU PLAY, FELLOW?
ANYTHING, SIR. PERHAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HEAR SOME OF THE OLD VORG HUNTING SONGS TO REMIND YOU OF HOME?

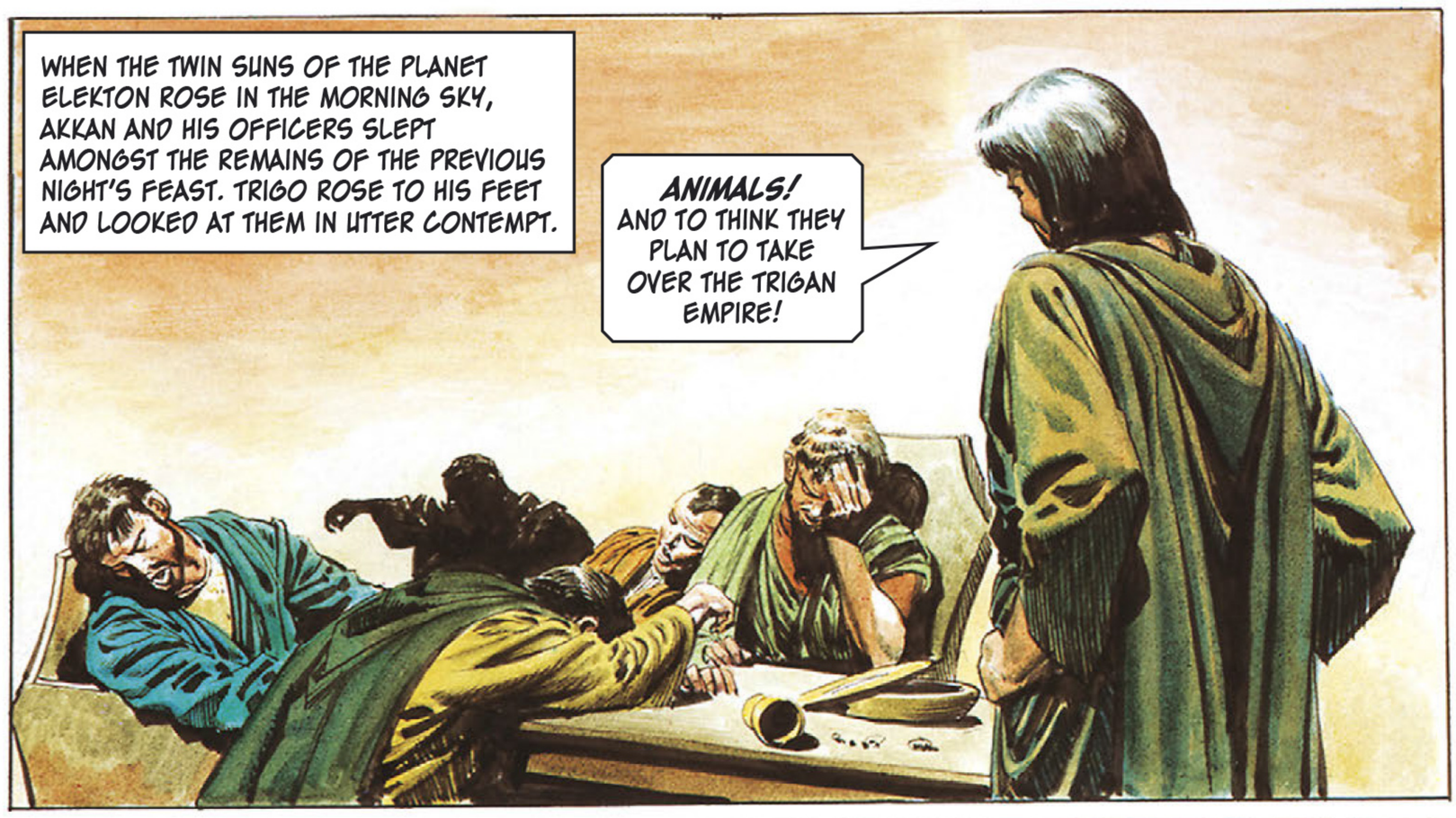
TRIGO WAS A SKILFUL MUSICIAN AND HE SOON HAD AKKAN AND HIS BRUTES SINGING THE OLD FAMILIAR SONGS WITH SENTIMENTAL TEARS STREAMING DOWN THEIR LEATHERY CHEEKS.
WE HAVE HUNTED THE ZARGOT, AND NOW WE RETURN HOME...
HOME, HOME, HOME... BACK TO OUR LOVED ONES...

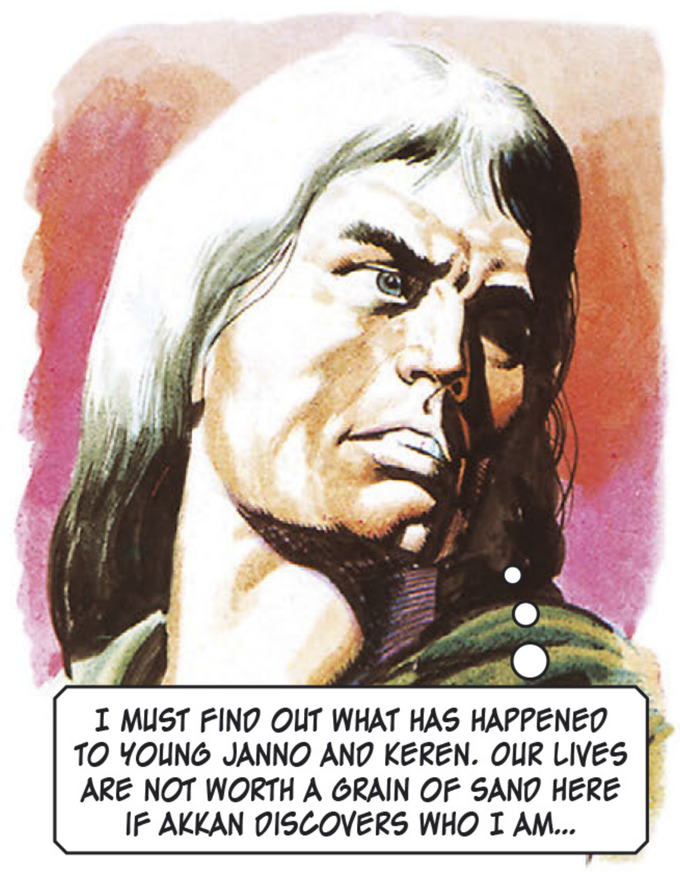
AKKAN WAS DELIGHTED.
WELL DONE, MUSICIAN. YOU ARE A FELLOW AFTER MY OWN HEART. TAKE THIS CUP OF WINE AND BE SEATED. YOU SHALL SUP THIS NIGHT WITH ME!

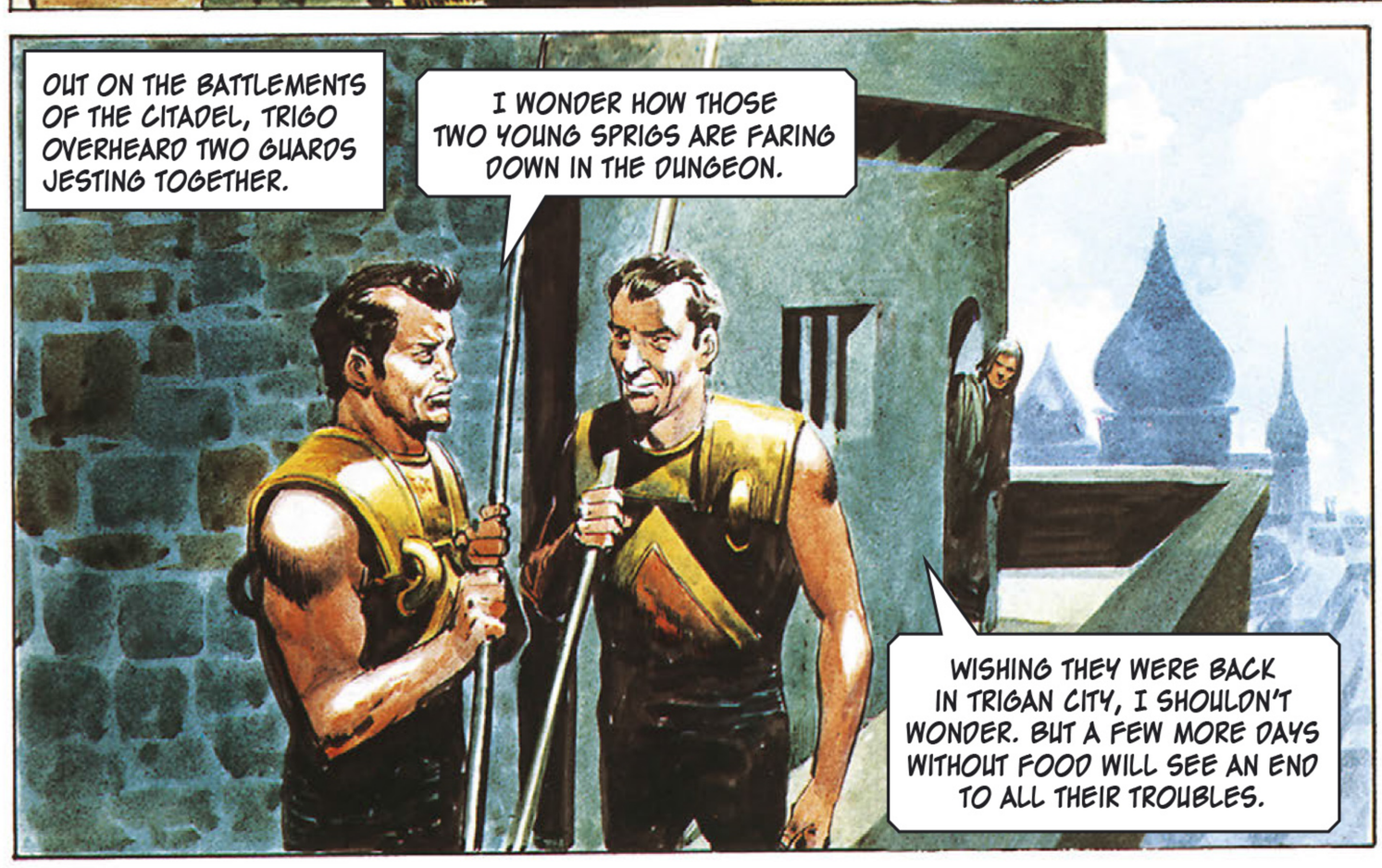

THE FEAST DRAGGED ON TILL THE EARLY HOURS. TOWARDS DAWN, GORGED WITH RICH FOOD AND WINE, AKKAN BEGAN TO BOAST...
I AM THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH OVER ZABRIZ BUT THAT IS NOT THE END OF IT! NEXT YEAR, WE SHALL MARCH ON TRIGAN CITY AND OVERTHROW TRIGO HIMSELF... THEN I SHALL BE EMPEROR!
LONG LIVE EMPEROR AKKAN OF TRIGAN!

TRIGO LISTENED... AND THE GRIM THOUGHT CAME TO HIM...
IF THAT BRUTE KNEW THAT THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS SEATED AT HIS TABLE NOW, IT WOULD BE THE END OF TRIGO!

MEANWHILE, SOME DISTANCE FROM ZABRIZ, THE WEDON BIRD CARRYING THE FATEFUL MESSAGE HAD PAUSED IN ITS FLIGHT TO FEED ON SOME SUCCULENT BERRIES...
TRIGO'S SECRET WAS SAFE... FOR A SHORT WHILE!


WHEN THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON ROSE IN THE MORNING SKY, AKKAN AND HIS OFFICERS SLEPT AMONGST THE REMAINS OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S FEAST. TRIGO ROSE TO HIS FEET AND LOOKED AT THEM IN UTTER CONTEMPT.
ANIMALS! AND TO THINK THEY PLAN TO TAKE OVER THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!


I MUST FIND OUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOUNG JANNO AND KEREN. OUR LIVES ARE NOT WORTH A GRAIN OF SAND HERE IF AKKAN DISCOVERS WHO I AM...


OUT ON THE BATTLEMENTS OF THE CITADEL, TRIGO OVERHEARD TWO GUARDS JESTING TOGETHER.
I WONDER HOW THOSE TWO YOUNG SPRIGS ARE FARING DOWN IN THE DUNGEON.
WISHING THEY WERE BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, I SHOULDN'T WONDER. BUT A FEW MORE DAYS WITHOUT FOOD WILL SEE AN END TO ALL THEIR TROUBLES.

ONE OF THE GUARDS PASSED ON HIS WAY, LEAVING HIS COMRADE ALONE. HE WAS NOT ALONE FOR LONG!
AAAAAAH!
QUIET! THE NEXT SOUND YOU MAKE WILL BE YOUR LAST!

LEAD THE WAY TO THE DUNGEON... MOVE!

THE TERRIFIED GUARD LED HIM DOWN STEEP STEPS TO THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN BELOW THE CITADEL.
THIS IS IT...

THE FLAT OF THE GUARD'S OWN SWORD BLADE LAID HIM LOW...

HE FOUND KEYS AT THE UNCONSCIOUS MAN'S BELT AND OPENED THE DOOR... TO SEE HIS NEPHEW AND KEREN MANACLED TO THE DANK WALL.
JANNO!
IT CAN'T BE... UNCLE!

TRIGO FREED THEM FROM THEIR CHAINS. KEREN WAS UNCONSCIOUS WITH HUNGER AND FATIGUE.
UNCLE! I DIDN'T FAIL YOU... I SWEAR IT!
I KNOW THAT NOW, JANNO. ALL THREE OF US WALKED INTO A DEN OF WILD BEASTS – AND FOR THE SAKE OF THE EMPIRE WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!

THEY MADE THEIR AWAY BACK UP TO THE CITADEL.
WHERE IS YOUR ATMOSPHERE CRAFT?
IT WAS DESTROYED, UNCLE!

THEY REACHED THE BATTLEMENTS TO FIND THAT THE ALARM WAS ALREADY BEING RAISED!
WHERE IS YOUR COMRADE?
HE WAS HERE WHEN I CAME PAST A SHORT WHILE AGO, SIR!
NOW WE'RE TRAPPED!

AND THEN... AKKAN SWAYED OUT OF THE HALL, BLINKING IN THE BRIGHT SUNSHINE, AND BELLOWED FURIOUSLY.
WHERE'S THE MUSICIAN? FIND HIM, CURSE YOU! I WANT TO HEAR HIM PLAY AGAIN!

TRIGO AND HIS YOUNG COMPANIONS WERE IN A TIGHT CORNER – BUT WORSE WAS TO FOLLOW! SWOOPING LOW OVER THE MOUNTAIN CREST, A SMALL BIRD HEADED FOR THE CITADEL...

IT FLUTTERED ONTO THE BATTLEMENTS AND ONE OF THE GUARDS PICKED IT UP.
IT'S CARRYING A MESSAGE!
THE MESSAGE WAS FROM A SPY IN TRIGAN CITY, INFORMING AKKAN THAT THE STROLLING MUSICIAN WAS NONE OTHER THAN THE EMPEROR TRIGO!

SNATCHING THE MESSAGE FROM THE GUARD'S HAND, AKKAN READ IT...
BY ALL THE STARS!
WHAT DOES IT SAY, AKKAN?

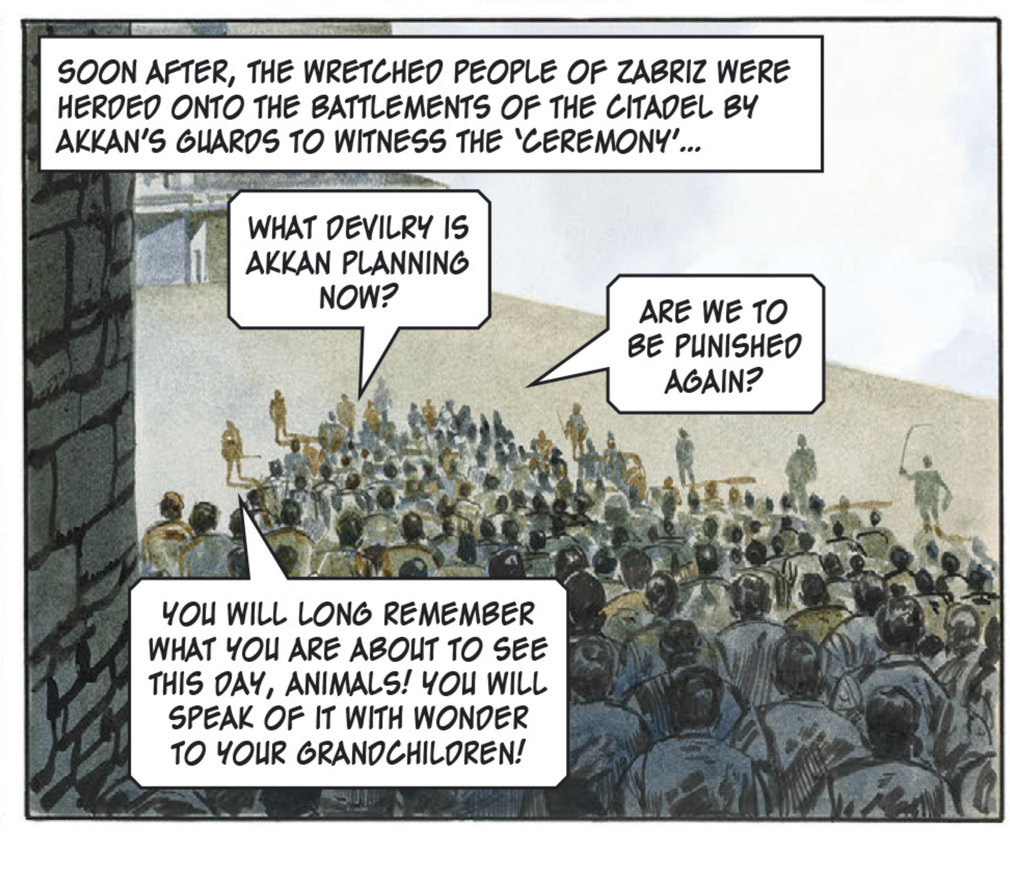
TRIGO IS IN OUR MIDST! HERE IN ZABRIZ! HE IS THE MUSICIAN! FIND HIM, YOU FOOLS... FIND HIM!

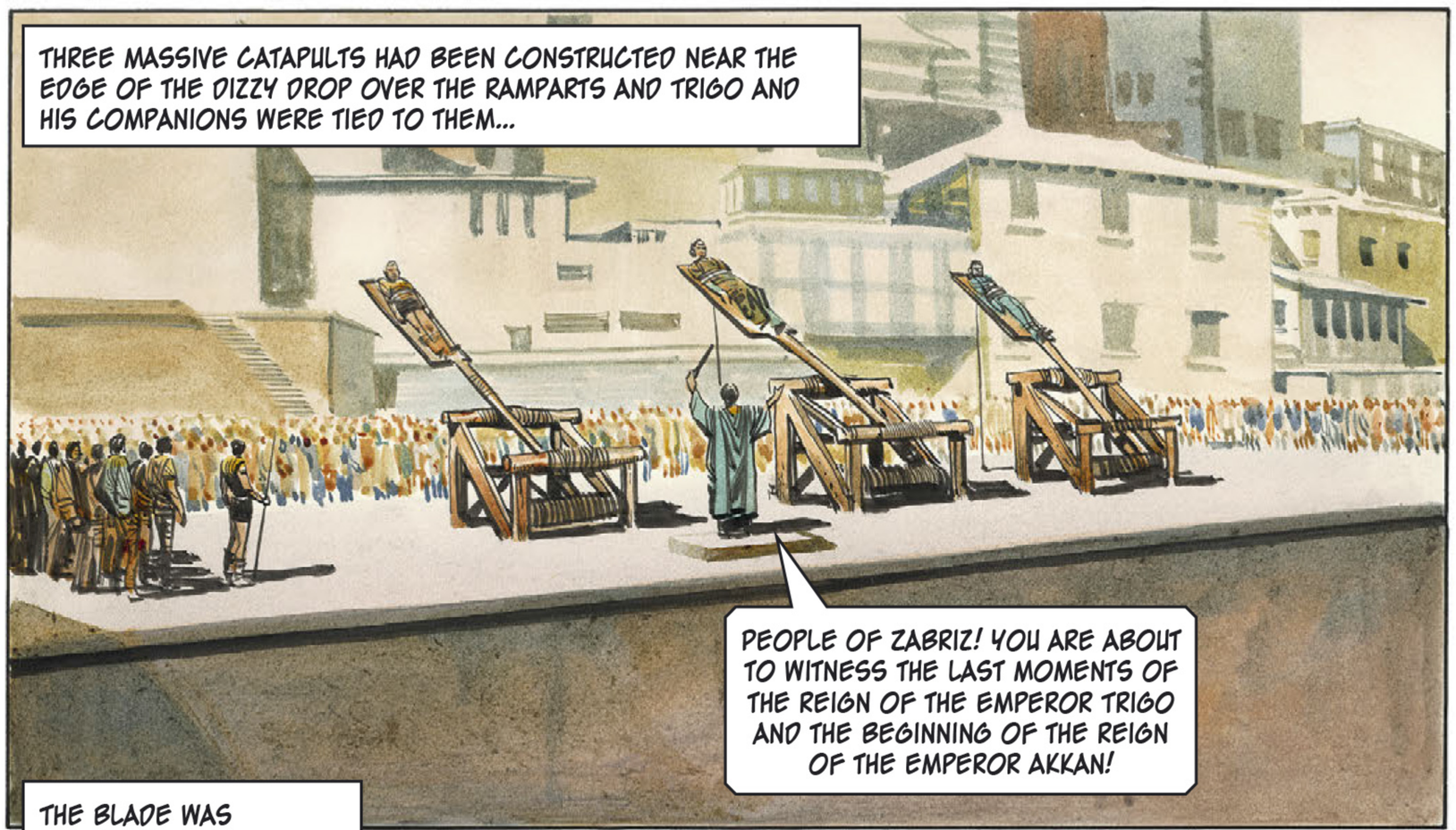
THE GUARDS RACED TO DO THEIR LEADER'S BIDDING... AND AS THEY PASSED CLOSE TO WHERE THE THREE LAY HIDDEN, YOUNG KEREN RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS AND GROANED LOUDLY!
UUUUUUUGH!
NO, KEREN... NO!

THE GUARDS HEARD... AND HALTED IN THEIR TRACKS.
THERE HE IS!
AND HE'S NOT ALONE!

TRIGO LEAPT INTO ACTION, CALLING TO HIS NEPHEW.
AFTER ME, JANNO... SEIZE A SWORD FOR YOURSELF AND FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE!
AAAAAAGH!

THE TWO FOUGHT BRAVELY BUT IT WAS A HOPELESS STRUGGLE. MINUTES LATER, THEY WERE OVERPOWERED AND DRAGGED BEFORE THE GLOATING AKKAN.
GREETINGS, YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY! IF I HAD KNOWN IT WAS YOU, I WOULD HAVE RECEIVED YOU WITH GREAT CEREMONY LAST NIGHT. BUT IT IS NOT TOO LATE... THE CEREMONY SHALL TAKE PLACE RIGHT AWAY - A CEREMONY OF GREETING AND FAREWELL!


SOON AFTER, THE WRETCHED PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ WERE HERDED ONTO THE BATTLEMENTS OF THE CITADEL BY AKKAN'S GUARDS TO WITNESS THE 'CEREMONY'...
WHAT DEVILRY IS AKKAN PLANNING NOW?
ARE WE TO BE PUNISHED AGAIN?
YOU WILL LONG REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE THIS DAY, ANIMALS! YOU WILL SPEAK OF IT WITH WONDER TO YOUR GRANDCHILDREN!


THREE MASSIVE CATAPULTS HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED NEAR THE EDGE OF THE DIZZY DROP OVER THE RAMPARTS AND TRIGO AND HIS COMPANIONS WERE TIED TO THEM...
PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ! YOU ARE ABOUT TO WITNESS THE LAST MOMENTS OF THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR TRIGO AND THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR AKKAN!

AKKAN'S SWORD WAS RAISED TO SEVER THE ROPE AND SEND TRIGO TO HIS DOOM ON THE ROCKS BELOW... AND THEN TRIGO'S VOICE RANG OUT, THRILLINGLY...
THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE, PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ! IF I GO, YOU WILL REMAIN SLAVES FOREVER!

THE BLADE WAS ALREADY DESCENDING... WHEN A STONE KNOCKED THE WEAPON FROM AKKAN'S NUMBED HAND!
AAAAAAGH!

INSTANTLY, THE CROWD SURGED FORWARD, SCATTERING THE GUARDS... AND A KNIFE SLASHED THROUGH TRIGO'S BONDS.
THANKS, FRIEND!

THERE WAS A BRIEF AND FURIOUS FIGHT NEAR THE EDGE OF THE DROP...
EEEEEEEEH!

FORCING HIS WAY THROUGH THE PRESS OF BATTLING MEN, TRIGO LOOKED ABOUT HIM FOR AKKAN... AND THEN HE SAW THE TREACHEROUS OFFICER...
AKKAN! I CALL ON YOU TO SURRENDER!
NEVER!

TRIGO FOLLOWED HIS QUARRY ALONG THE PERILOUS LEDGE... AND THEN HE SAW HIS DANGER!
FAREWELL... IMPERIAL MAJESTY!

WHEN TRIGO SAW THE GUN IN AKKAN'S HAND, HE TRIED TO ESCAPE ROUND THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING. BUT AKKAN FOLLOWED AND...
HURLING THE WEAPON INTO THE ABYSS, HE REACHED FOR A HANDHOLD AND HAULED HIMSELF UP FROM THE LEDGE.
SURRENDER, AKKAN... AND I PROMISE YOU A FAIR TRIAL WHEN YOU GET BACK TO TRIGAN CITY!
NEVER! NEVER!

AKKAN PRESSED THE TRIGGER AGAIN... BUT THE PISTOL WAS EMPTY!
ACH! TEN THOUSAND CURSES!

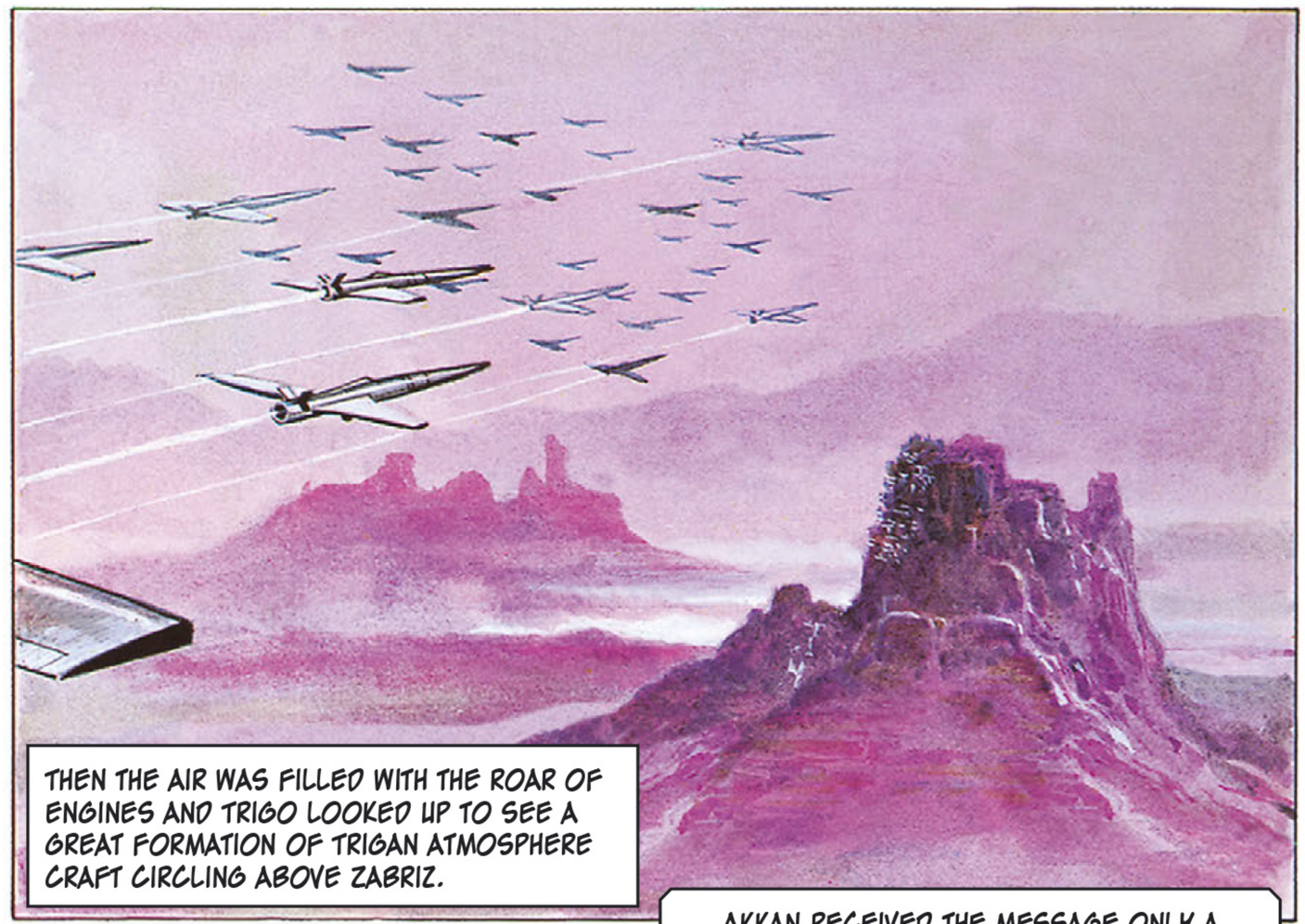
TRIGO FOLLOWED HIS QUARRY UP THE SHEER FACE OF THE CITADEL... AND THEN HE SAW HIS PERIL...

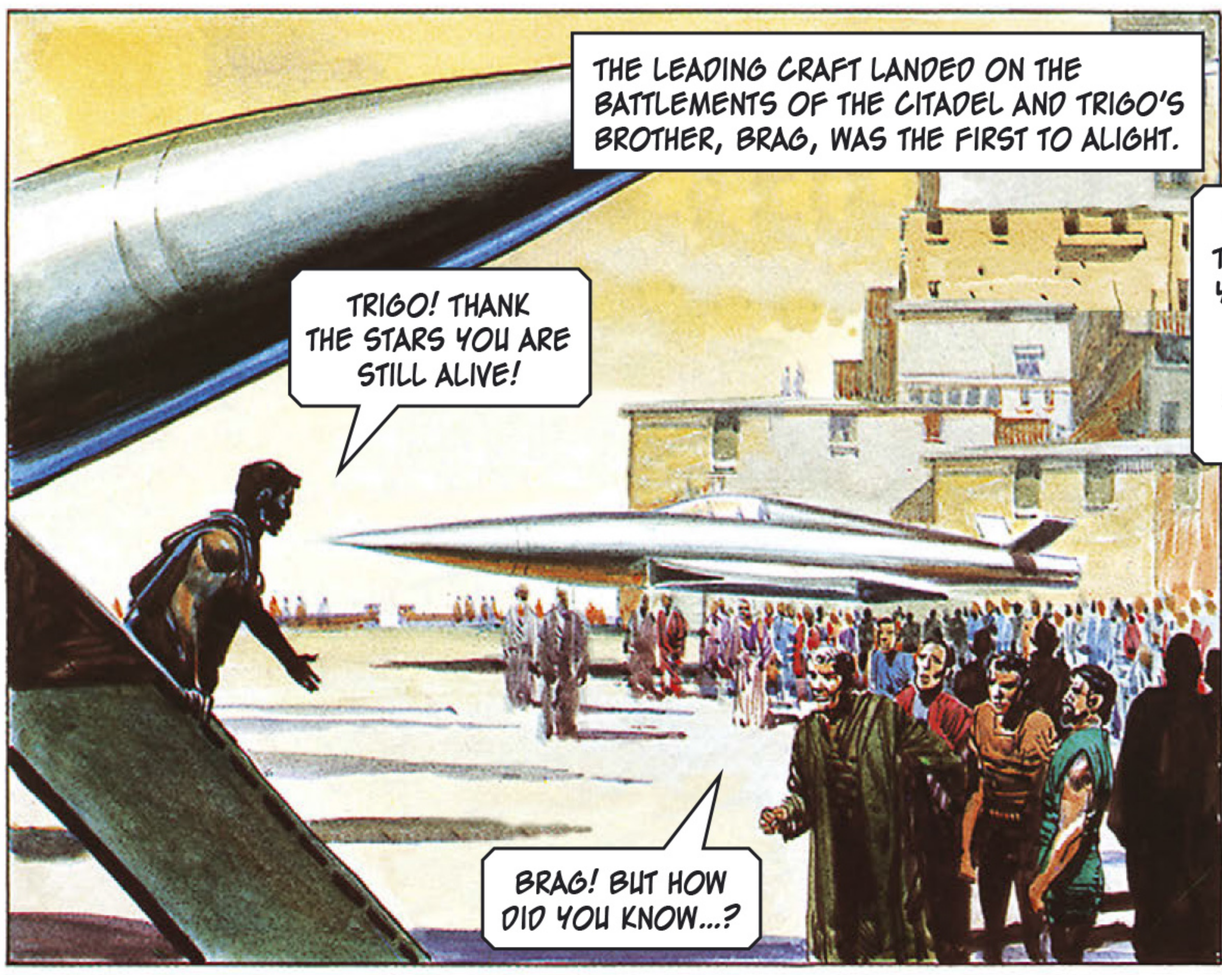
HE PRESSED HIMSELF FLAT AGAINST THE ANCIENT WALL... AND FELT THE WIND OF ITS PASSING, LIKE THE WINGS OF THE ANGEL OF DEATH!

AKKAN BARED HIS TEETH IN A GRIN OF FIERCE TRIUMPH AS HE REACHED FOR ANOTHER STONE...
LOOK YOUR LAST UPON THE SKY, MIGHTY EMPEROR! THIS TIME I SHALL NOT MISS!

THEN... A FRIGHTENED SQUAWK AND A FLUTTER OF WINGS... AND AKKAN WAS CLUTCHING AT THE EMPTY AIR! IT WAS THE HARMLESS WEDON BIRD THAT SEALED THE FATE OF THE TYRANT OF ZABRIZ!

HE HAS PAID THE PRICE FOR HIS CRIMES!


THEN THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE ROAR OF ENGINES AND TRIGO LOOKED UP TO SEE A GREAT FORMATION OF TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT CIRCLING ABOVE ZABRIZ.


THE LEADING CRAFT LANDED ON THE BATTLEMENTS OF THE CITADEL AND TRIGO'S BROTHER, BRAG, WAS THE FIRST TO ALIGHT.
TRIGO! THANK THE STARS YOU ARE STILL ALIVE!
BRAG! BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW...?

BRAG EXPLAINED...
AKKAN RECEIVED THE MESSAGE ONLY A SHORT WHILE AGO. THE BOYS AND I WOULD BE LYING AT THE FOOT OF THE CLIFF BY NOW IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE BRAVERY OF THE FAITHFUL PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ!
WE CAUGHT A SPY IN TRIGAN CITY – ONE OF YOUR OWN OFFICERS! HE CONFESSED TO HAVING SENT A MESSAGE BY WEDON BIRD TO AKKAN.

TRIGO ADDRESSED THE PEOPLE OF ZABRIZ IN A RINGING VOICE.
FROM NOW ON YOU WILL NO LONGER BE SLAVES BUT FREE PEOPLE WITH THE RIGHT TO RULE YOURSELVES AS CITIZENS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR TRIGO!

LATER THAT DAY, THE AIR FLEET TOOK OFF FOR THE RETURN JOURNEY TO TRIGAN CITY. AS THEY CIRCLED FOR THE LAST TIME OVER THE CITADEL, YOUNG JANNO LOOKED DOWN...
FAREWELL, ZABRIZ... MAY I NEVER SET EYES ON YOU AGAIN!

TRIGO GLANCED AT HIS YOUNG NEPHEW... AND SMILED.
YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO ZABRIZ, JANNO. YOU LEARNT A LESSON THERE... A LESSON IN THE ART OF RULING THAT WILL STAND YOU IN GOOD STEAD SHOULD YOU BECOME THE EMPEROR OF TRIGAN.

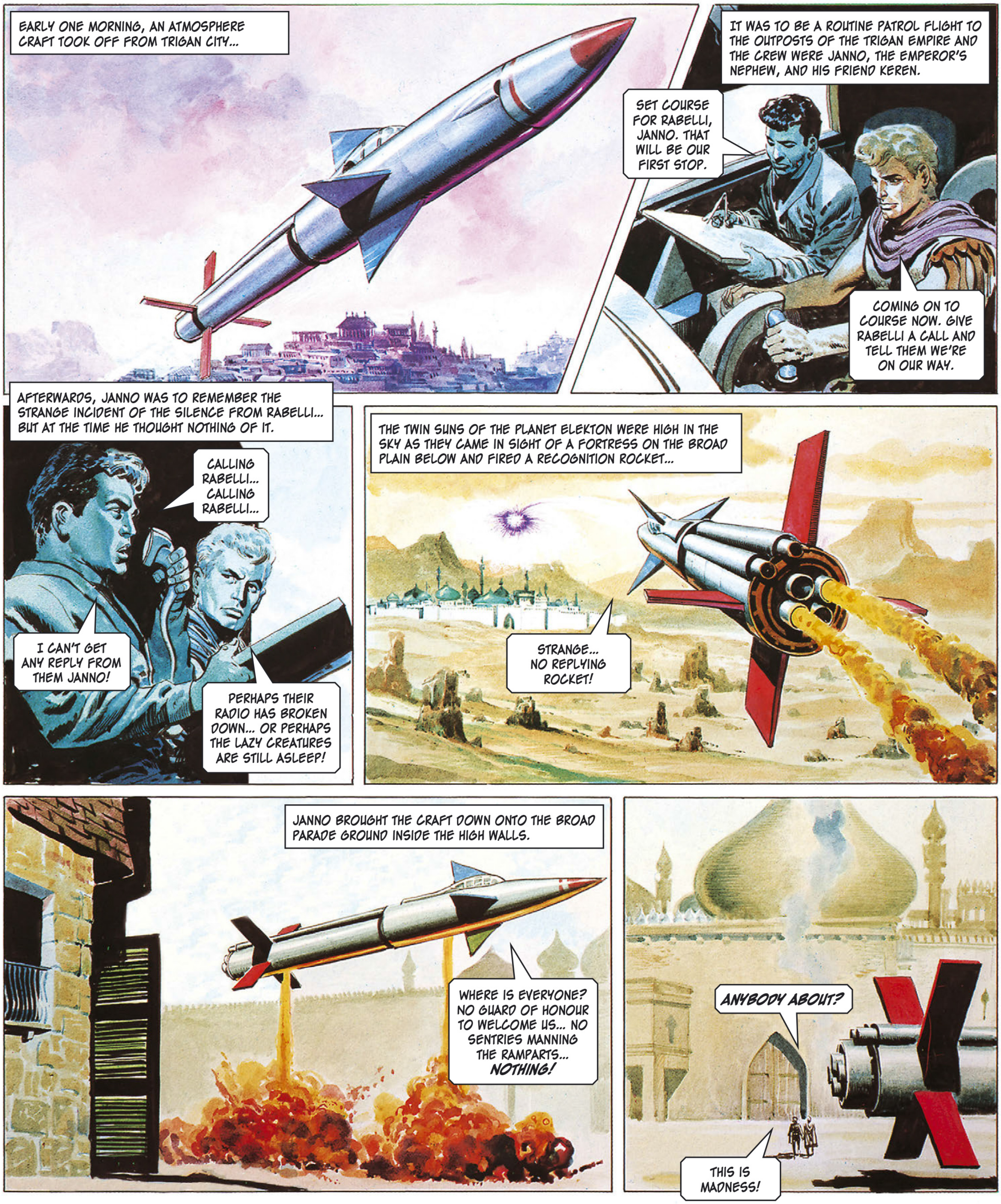
IX

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE LOKAN INVASION

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 274 – 279

15th April – 20th May 1967


EARLY ONE MORNING, AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT TOOK OFF FROM TRIGAN CITY...
IT WAS TO BE A ROUTINE PATROL FLIGHT TO THE OUTPOSTS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AND THE CREW WERE JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, AND HIS FRIEND KEREN.
SET COURSE FOR RABELLI, JANNO. THAT WILL BE OUR FIRST STOP.
COMING ON TO COURSE NOW. GIVE RABELLI A CALL AND TELL THEM WE'RE ON OUR WAY.
AFTERWARDS, JANNO WAS TO REMEMBER THE STRANGE INCIDENT OF THE SILENCE FROM RABELLI... BUT AT THE TIME HE THOUGHT NOTHING OF IT.
CALLING RABELLI... CALLING RABELLI...
I CAN'T GET ANY REPLY FROM THEM JANNO!
PERHAPS THEIR RADIO HAS BROKEN DOWN... OR PERHAPS THE LAZY CREATURES ARE STILL ASLEEP!
THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WERE HIGH IN THE SKY AS THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF A FORTRESS ON THE BROAD PLAIN BELOW AND FIRED A RECOGNITION ROCKET...
STRANGE... NO REPLYING ROCKET!
JANNO BROUGHT THE CRAFT DOWN ONTO THE BROAD PARADE GROUND INSIDE THE HIGH WALLS.
WHERE IS EVERYONE? NO GUARD OF HONOUR TO WELCOME US... NO SENTRIES MANNING THE RAMPARTS... NOTHING!
ANYBODY ABOUT?
THIS IS MADNESS!

THE GREAT EATING HALL WAS LAID AS IF FOR THE MORNING MEAL... BUT THE PLACES WERE EMPTY!
I – I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

THE FOOD IS STILL WARM!

LET'S SPLIT UP AND SEARCH EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY IN THE FORTRESS. THE WHOLE GARRISON CAN'T HAVE VANISHED WITHOUT TRACE!
JANNO... I DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL!

A GRIM PREMONITION OF EVIL SETTLED OVER JANNO AS HE KICKED OPEN THE DOOR OF THE GARRISON COMMANDER.

THE ROOM WAS QUITE EMPTY!
BUT SURELY HE WOULD NOT LEAVE THE FORT WITHOUT PUTTING ON HIS TRAPPINGS?

AND THEN... THE SOUND OF LURCHING, HESITANT FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRWAY OUTSIDE.
WHO'S THERE?

HE RELAXED AND LOWERED HIS BLADE WHEN HE SAW A FAMILIAR FIGURE IN THE DOORWAY.
OH! IT'S YOU, KEREN. DID YOU FIND ANYTHING?

HIS FRIEND'S REPLY – AND THE EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE – CHILLED THE BLOOD IN JANNO'S VEINS!
WHO ARE YOU? AND WHY DO YOU CALL ME KEREN?

JANNO STARED IN ALARM AT HIS FRIEND AS HIS WORDS BROUGHT AN EXPRESSION OF SUSPICION AND HOSTILITY TO KEREN'S FACE.
KEREN! IT IS I... JANNO!
I KNOW NO-ONE NAMED JANNO!

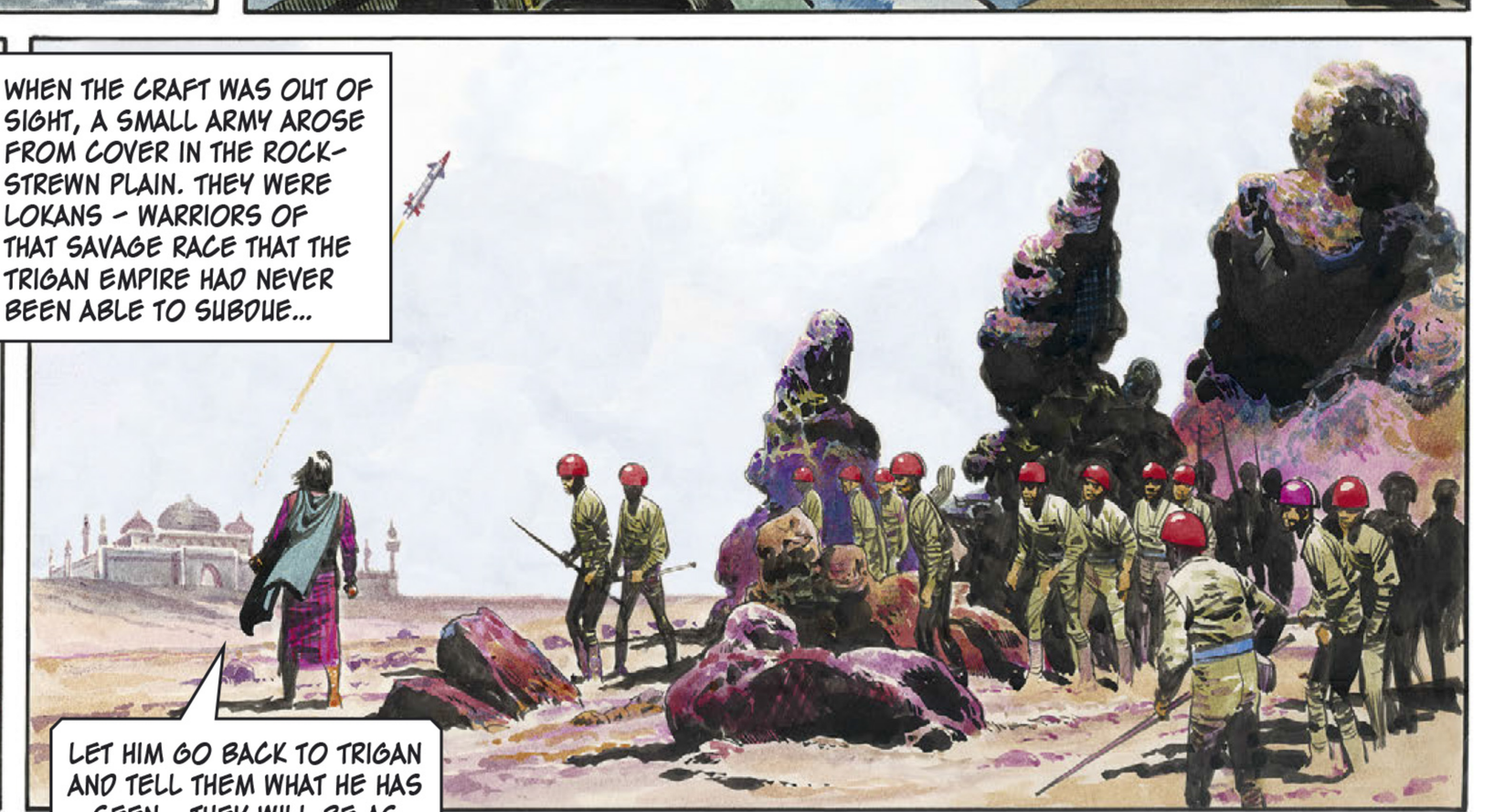
KEREN'S BLADE HISSED FROM ITS SCABBARD.
YOU ARE LYING! WHOEVER YOU ARE, YOU MUST BE AN ENEMY!
NO!

JANNO DUCKED... AND THE SWORD SLICED OVER HIS BENT HEAD. IN THAT SAME INSTANT, HE DROVE HIS FIST FORWARD SHATTERINGLY...
YOU MUST HAVE TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES!
UUUUGH!

AND, AS HE STOOD THERE OVER HIS FALLEN COMRADE IN THE DEATHLY SILENCE OF THAT EMPTY FORTRESS, HE FELT THE FINGER OF COLD FEAR CREEP UP HIS SPINE.
THIS PLACE IS ACCURSED! I MUST GET AWAY FROM HERE BEFORE THE EVIL INFLUENCE TAKES POSSESSION OF MY MIND ALSO!

SOON, WITH KEREN SLUMPED IN THE SEAT BESIDE HIM, HE WAS RISING INTO THE SKY ABOVE THE GRIM-WALLED FORTRESS.
WHEN I REPORT THIS FANTASTIC BUSINESS TO TRIGAN CITY, THEY'LL NEVER BELIEVE ME!

SHARP EYES WATCHED THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT AS IT SET COURSE BACK TO TRIGAN CITY...
HA!


WHEN THE CRAFT WAS OUT OF SIGHT, A SMALL ARMY AROSE FROM COVER IN THE ROCK-STREWN PLAIN. THEY WERE LOKANS - WARRIORS OF THAT SAVAGE RACE THAT THE TRIGAN EMPIRE HAD NEVER BEEN ABLE TO SUBDUE...
LET HIM GO BACK TO TRIGAN AND TELL THEM WHAT HE HAS SEEN... THEY WILL BE AS MYSTIFIED AS HE IS!

SOON, JANNO WAS BRINGING HIS CRAFT TO LAND IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF TRIGAN CITY. HE HAD FLASHED A MESSAGE AHEAD OF HIM THAT HE BROUGHT SHOCKING NEWS AND A GREAT CROWD AWAITED HIS ARRIVAL...

PRESENTLY, HE WATCHED WITH HIS UNCLE, THE EMPEROR TRIGO, AS WISE OLD PERIC EXAMINED KEREN, WHO HAD RECOVERED FROM THE BLOW.

SO YOU DO NOT REMEMBER YOUR NAME, KEREN?

WHY DOES EVERYONE INSIST ON CALLING ME KEREN?

PERIC WAS THE BEST PHYSICIAN IN THE EMPIRE AND HE GAVE HIS OPINION...

THERE IS ONLY ONE EXPLANATION FOR HIS CONDITION... ***SUNSTROKE!*** KEREN MUST HAVE BEEN FLYING IN THE HOT SUN WITHOUT HIS PROTECTIVE HELMET.

SUNSTROKE? THEN WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GARRISON OF RABELLI FORTRESS? ***DID THEY ALL GET SUNSTROKE TOO?***

MEANWHILE, THE LOKAN REBELS WERE HERDING A CROWD OF PUZZLED-LOOKING MEN INTO THE BROAD PARADE GROUND OF RABELLI FORT.

WE HAVE ROUNDED UP THE GARRISON, VANNU. THEY WERE WANDERING OUT ON THE PLAIN LIKE LOST ANIMALS.

GOOD! BRING THE GARRISON COMMANDER TO ME!

A HALF-DRESSED MAN WAS DRAGGED BEFORE THE LOKAN LEADER, VANNU.

DO YOU REMEMBER WAKING UP THIS MORNING, COMMANDER... AND PERHAPS CALLING YOUR GUARD FOR A DRINK OF WATER?

I REMEMBER... NOTHING!

VANNU TOOK A PHIAL OF COLOURLESS LIQUID FROM HIS POUCH AND HELD IT UP TO THE SUNLIGHT.

SUCCESS, MY WARRIORS! ONE DROP OF THIS COMPOUND IN THE DRINKING WATER OF RABELLI FORT HAS TURNED THESE TRIGAN SOLDIERS INTO MINDLESS ANIMALS!

AND NOW... TO DEAL WITH THE INHABITANTS OF TRIGAN CITY IN THE SAME MANNER!

LAWRENCE

IN TRIGAN CITY, JANNO SUDDENLY TURNED ON PERIC IN A BLAZING FURY OF IMPATIENCE.
YOU DODDERING OLD MAN! CAN'T YOU SEE IT IS SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS AND SINISTER THAN SUNSTROKE?

TRIGO'S VOICE RASPED OUT, COMMANDINGLY.
SILENCE, YOUNG OAF! THAT IS NO WAY TO SPEAK TO THE WISEST MAN IN THE EMPIRE!
UNCLE, I WILL NOT BE SILENT! I TELL YOU-

JANNO WAS TRIGO'S FAVOURITE NEPHEW... BUT THE UNCLE WAS ALSO THE EMPEROR...
GUARDS! PLACE JANNO UNDER CLOSE ARREST TILL HIS HOT BLOOD COOLS DOWN!

AFTER JANNO HAD BEEN LED AWAY, TRIGO TURNED TO HIS OLD FRIEND.
THE YOUNG RASCAL COULD BE RIGHT, YOU KNOW. IT IS HARDLY LIKELY THAT THE ENTIRE GARRISON OF RABELLI FORTRESS WOULD ALL GET SUNSTROKE!
THEN IT IS BEYOND MY MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE. I AM BAFFLED, TRIGO!

SCOWLING WITH FURY, JANNO WAS CROSSING THE COURTYARD WITH HIS GUARDS...

SUDDENLY, A BOOTED FOOT AND AN IRON-HARD YOUNG FIST LASHED OUT!
AAAAAAH!

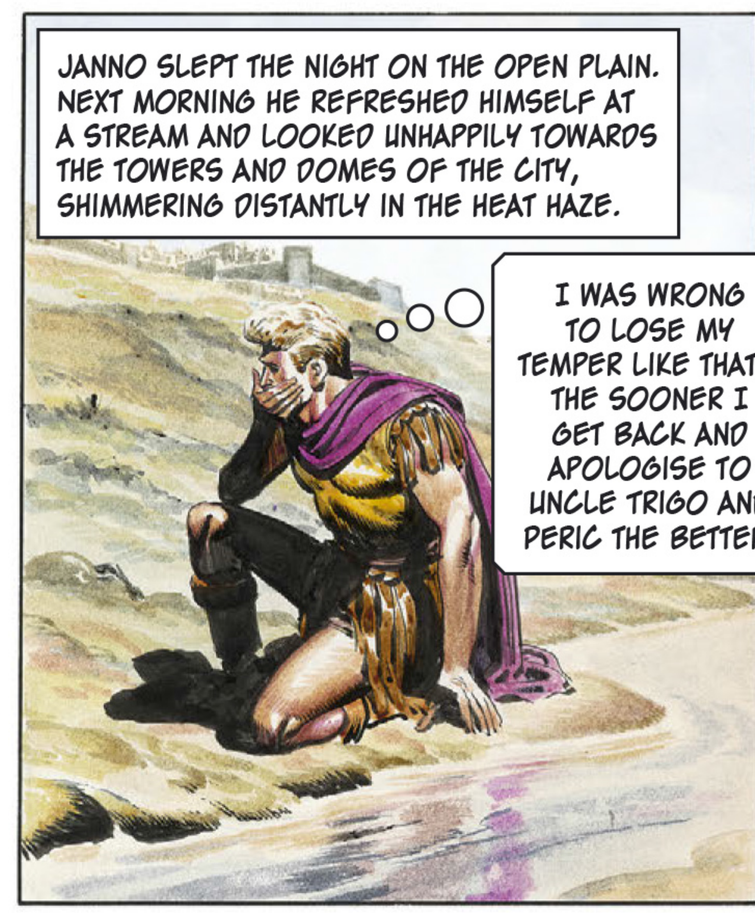
IN A TRICE, HE LITHELY LEAPT THE HIGH WALL TO FREEDOM!
STOP! I COMMAND YOU TO STOP!

DROPPING LIGHTLY TO THE GROUND, HE RACED OFF INTO THE GATHERING DUSK OF THE GREAT PLAIN WITH FURY BLAZING IN HIS HEART.
CURSE THEM! CURSE MY UNCLE AND THAT OLD FOOL PERIC!

IT WAS NEARLY DARK WHEN A LOKAN TRADER RODE IN THROUGH THE GATES OF THE CITY AND SHOWED HIS PASSPORT AS A CITIZEN OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
PASS INTO THE CITY, LOKAN.

THE LOKAN MADE HIS WAY TO THE CANAL OF PURE SPRING WATER FROM THE MOUNTAINS WHICH PROVIDED THE CITY'S DRINKING WATER.

HE POURED THE CONTENTS OF A SMALL PHIAL INTO THE CANAL.
NOW...

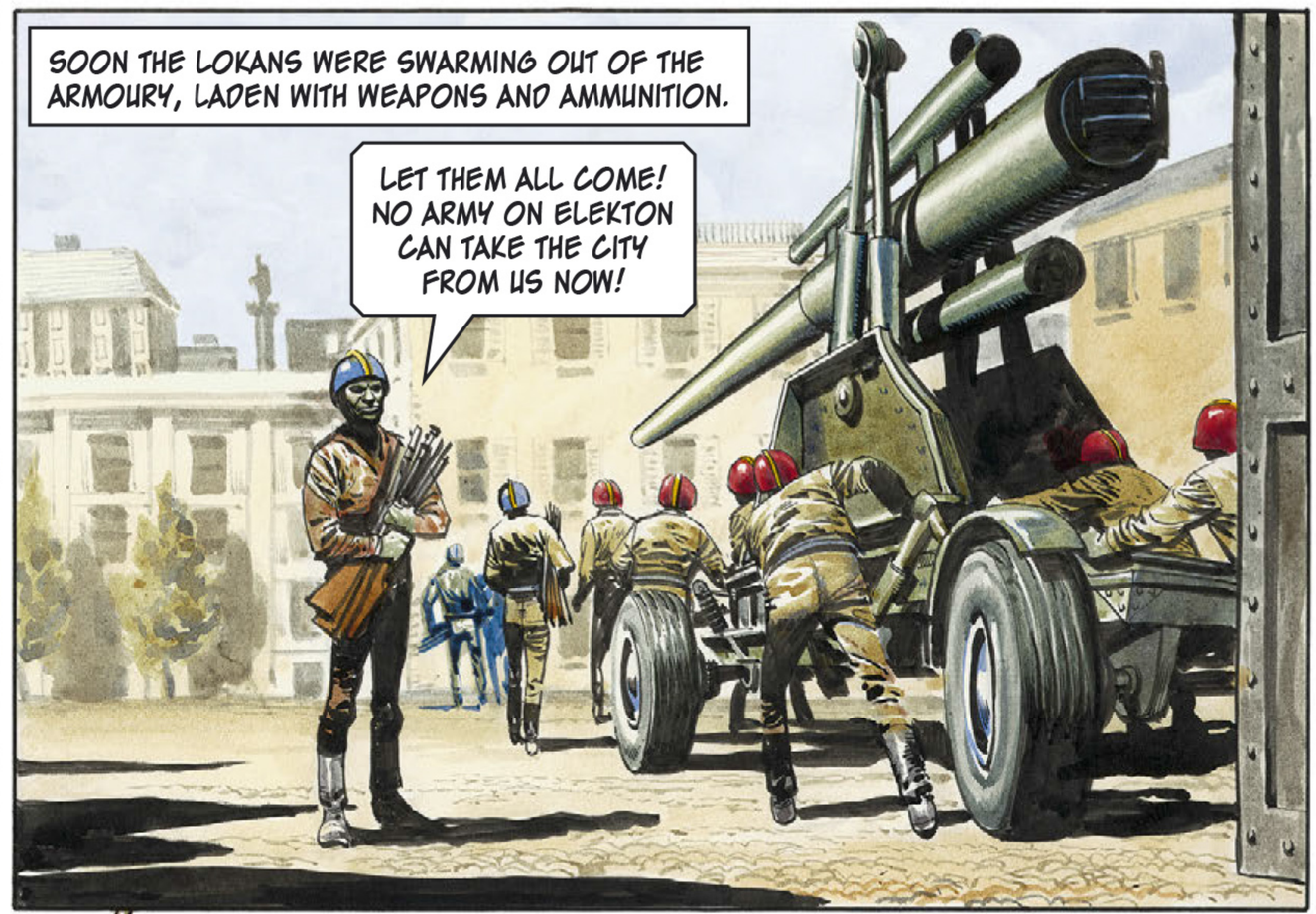

JANNO SLEPT THE NIGHT ON THE OPEN PLAIN. NEXT MORNING HE REFRESHED HIMSELF AT A STREAM AND LOOKED UNHAPPILY TOWARDS THE TOWERS AND DOMES OF THE CITY, SHIMMERING DISTANTLY IN THE HEAT HAZE.
I WAS WRONG TO LOSE MY TEMPER LIKE THAT... THE SOONER I GET BACK AND APOLOGISE TO UNCLE TRIGO AND PERIC THE BETTER!

THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WERE HIGH IN THE SKY WHEN HE CAME TO THE CITY GATES... AND ALL WAS STRANGELY QUIET...
WHERE ARE THE SENTRIES?

HE WALKED INTO THE VAST SQUARE AND LOOKED ABOUT HIM IN ASTONISHMENT...
WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

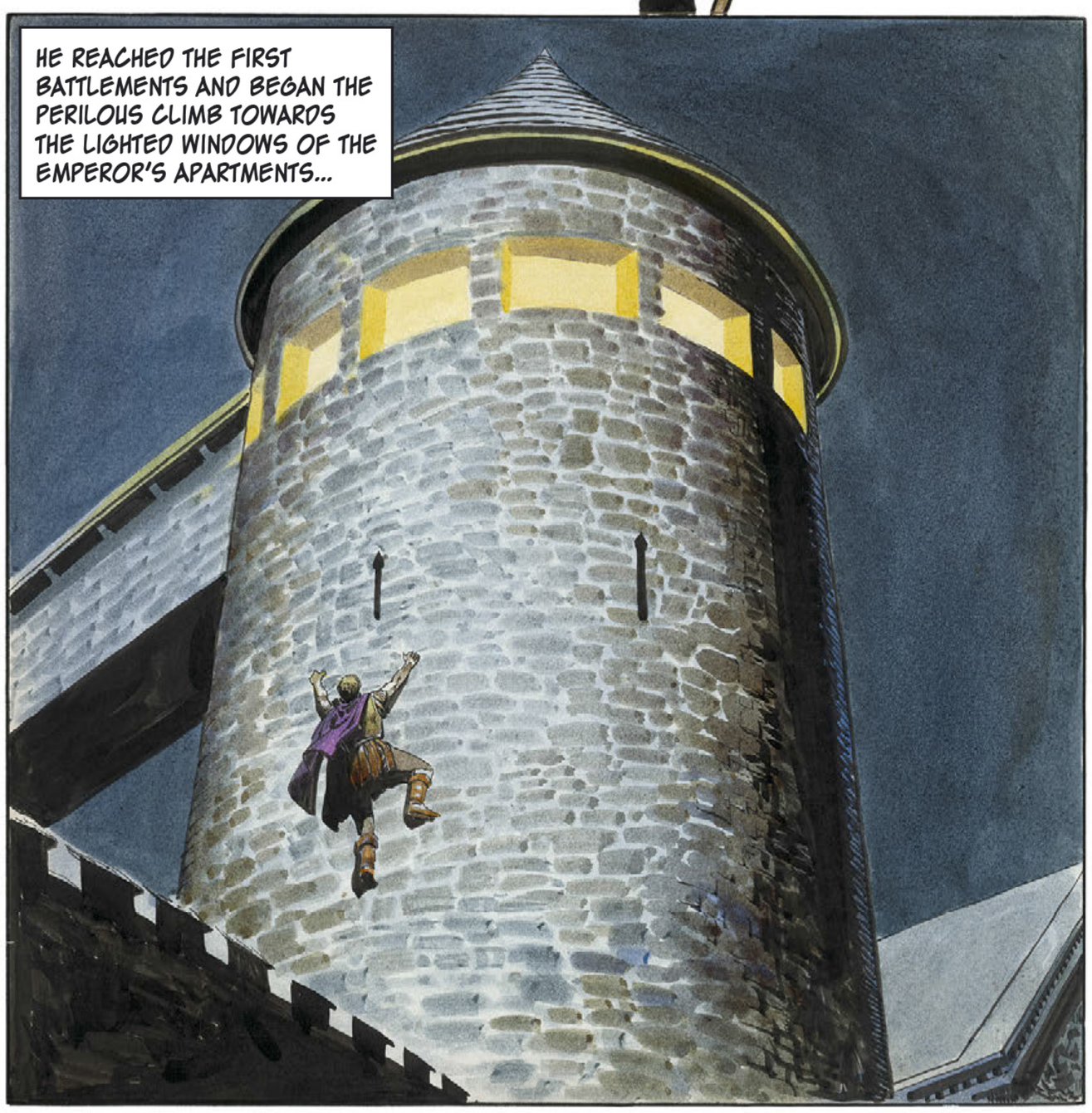
A DOCILE CROWD OF TRIGANS WANDERED INTO THE MAIN SQUARE OF THE CITY... HERDED ON BY GRINNING LOKANS.
MOVE, YOU MINDLESS ANIMALS... MOVE!
FROM THE FAR END OF THE SQUARE, JANNO WATCHED THE SCENE WITH ALARM. SUDDENLY, HE WAS KNOCKED SPINNING BY THE SHAFT OF A LANCE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? JOIN UP WITH THE OTHERS... MOVE!
THE AWFUL REALISATION CAME TO JANNO...
YOU HEARD ME, ANIMAL! MOVE!
THE LOKANS... THE LOKANS ARE BEHIND ALL THIS!
HE JOINED THE CROWD OF BLANK-FACED CITIZENS AND SAW HIS UNCLE... BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF RECOGNITION FROM TRIGO.
HE DOESN'T KNOW ME... LIKE THE REST OF THEM, HIS MEMORY IS A COMPLETE BLANK!
THEN THE LOKAN LEADER BOWED MOCKINGLY TO TRIGO.
GREETINGS, IMPERIAL MAJESTY! PERMIT ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF... I AM VANNU!
WHY DO YOU CALL ME... IMPERIAL MAJESTY?
TRIGO'S BEWILDERMENT DREW GUFFAWS OF LAUGHTER FROM THE BRUTAL LOKANS... AND VANNU'S EYES NARROWED WITH FIENDISH DELIGHT.
AN HOUR AGO, TRIGO, YOU WERE THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH OVER THE MIGHTY TRIGAN EMPIRE... BUT NOW YOU ARE LESS THAN NOTHING! I, VANNU, AM THE EMPEROR NOW!
THEN, VANNU AND HIS MEN DISCUSSED THEIR PLANS QUITE OPENLY BEFORE THE TRIGANS... UNAWARE THAT YOUNG JANNO'S MIND WAS QUITE CLEAR...
WHEN THE NEWS GETS OUT, THE TRIGANS' ALLIES WILL COME SWARMING TO AVENGE THEM!
WE SHALL NEED ALL THE ARMS AND AMMUNITION WE CAN LAY OUR HANDS ON, VANNU!
FIND THE CITY CAPTAIN! HE WILL OPEN UP THE ARMOURY!
THEY DRAGGED FORTH THE MINDLESS WRETCH WHO HAD BEEN THE CITY CAPTAIN AND VANNU PRODUCED A PHIAL OF RED LIQUID...
WE WILL RESTORE HIS MEMORY FOR A SHORT WHILE... GIVE HIM A SWALLOW OF THIS ANTIDOTE!

THE OFFICER DRANK SOME OF THE ANTIDOTE AND HIS MEMORY WAS INSTANTLY RESTORED... AND WITH MEMORY CAME FEAR!
OPEN UP THE CITY ARMOURY... OR DIE!
ANYTHING... I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU SAY!


SOON THE LOKANS WERE SWARMING OUT OF THE ARMOURY, LADEN WITH WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION.
LET THEM ALL COME! NO ARMY ON ELEKTON CAN TAKE THE CITY FROM US NOW!

THE DAY WORE ON AND JANNO CROUCHED WITH THE OTHERS IN THE CITY SQUARE... THINKING... THINKING...
I MUST DRINK THE SAME WATER AS THE LOKANS... AND SOMEHOW I HAVE TO GET THE ANTIDOTE FROM THAT FIEND VANNU...

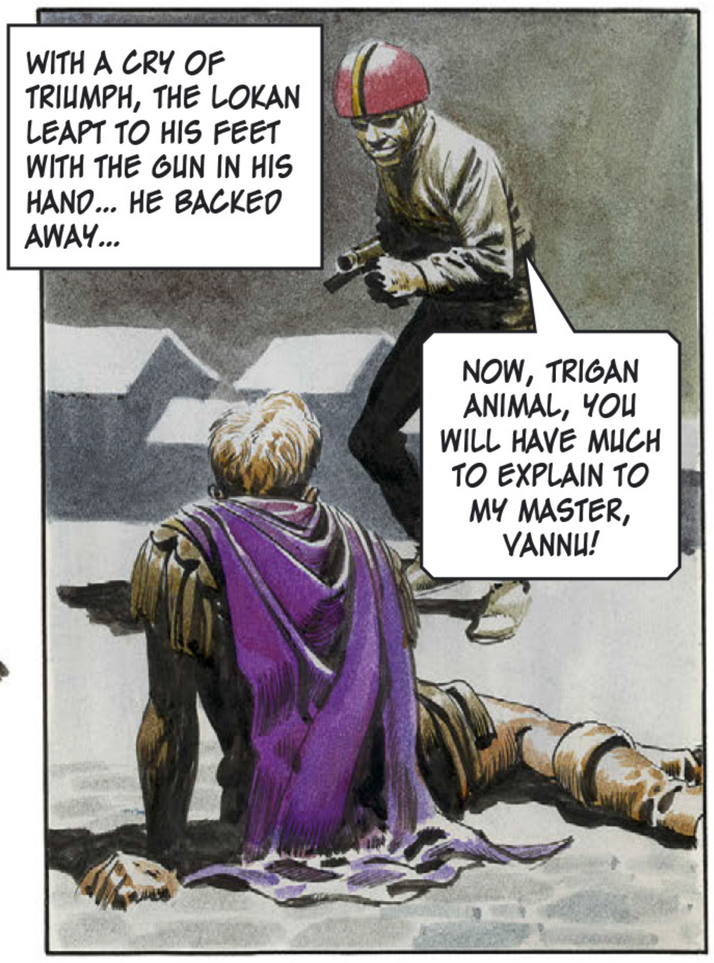
WHEN NIGHT FELL OVER THE STRICKEN CITY, JANNO CREPT SILENTLY TOWARDS THE WALL OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE.
NOW... TO FIND VANNU – AND THE ANTIDOTE!


HE REACHED THE FIRST BATTLEMENTS AND BEGAN THE PERILOUS CLIMB TOWARDS THE LIGHTED WINDOWS OF THE EMPEROR'S APARTMENTS...

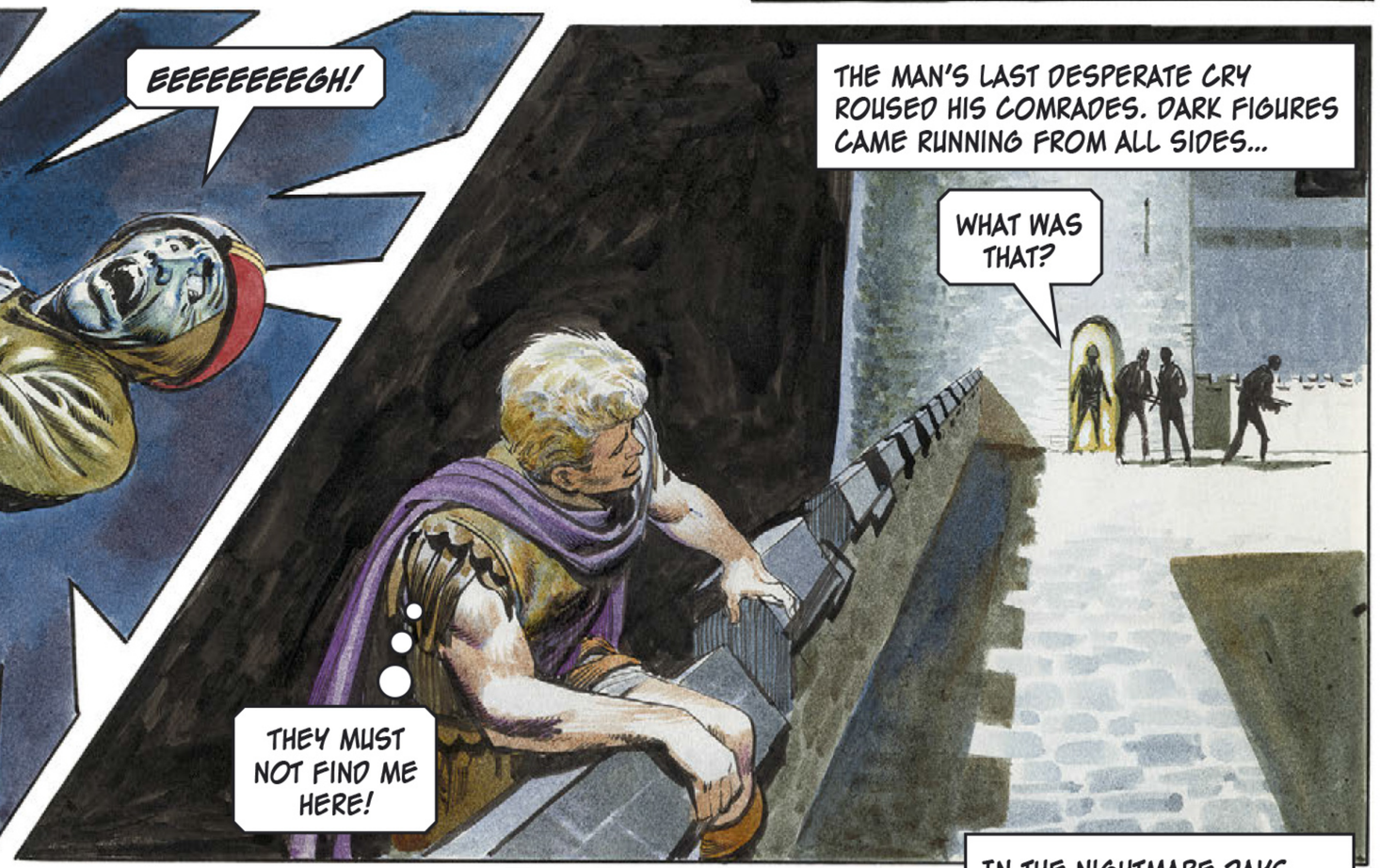
AND THEN... DISASTER! HE WAS SPOTTED BY A LOKAN SENTRY!
HEY!

JANNO LEAPT TOWARDS THE SENTRY!

THEY CRASHED TOGETHER TO THE STONE ROOF OF THE BATTLEMENTS... THEN FOLLOWED A DESPERATE STRUGGLE FOR THE POSSESSION OF THE WEAPON...


WITH A CRY OF TRIUMPH, THE LOKAN LEAPT TO HIS FEET WITH THE GUN IN HIS HAND... HE BACKED AWAY...
NOW, TRIGAN ANIMAL, YOU WILL HAVE MUCH TO EXPLAIN TO MY MASTER, VANNU!

...AND FELL OVER THE RAMPARTS TO THE SQUARE BELOW!
EEEEEEEEGH!

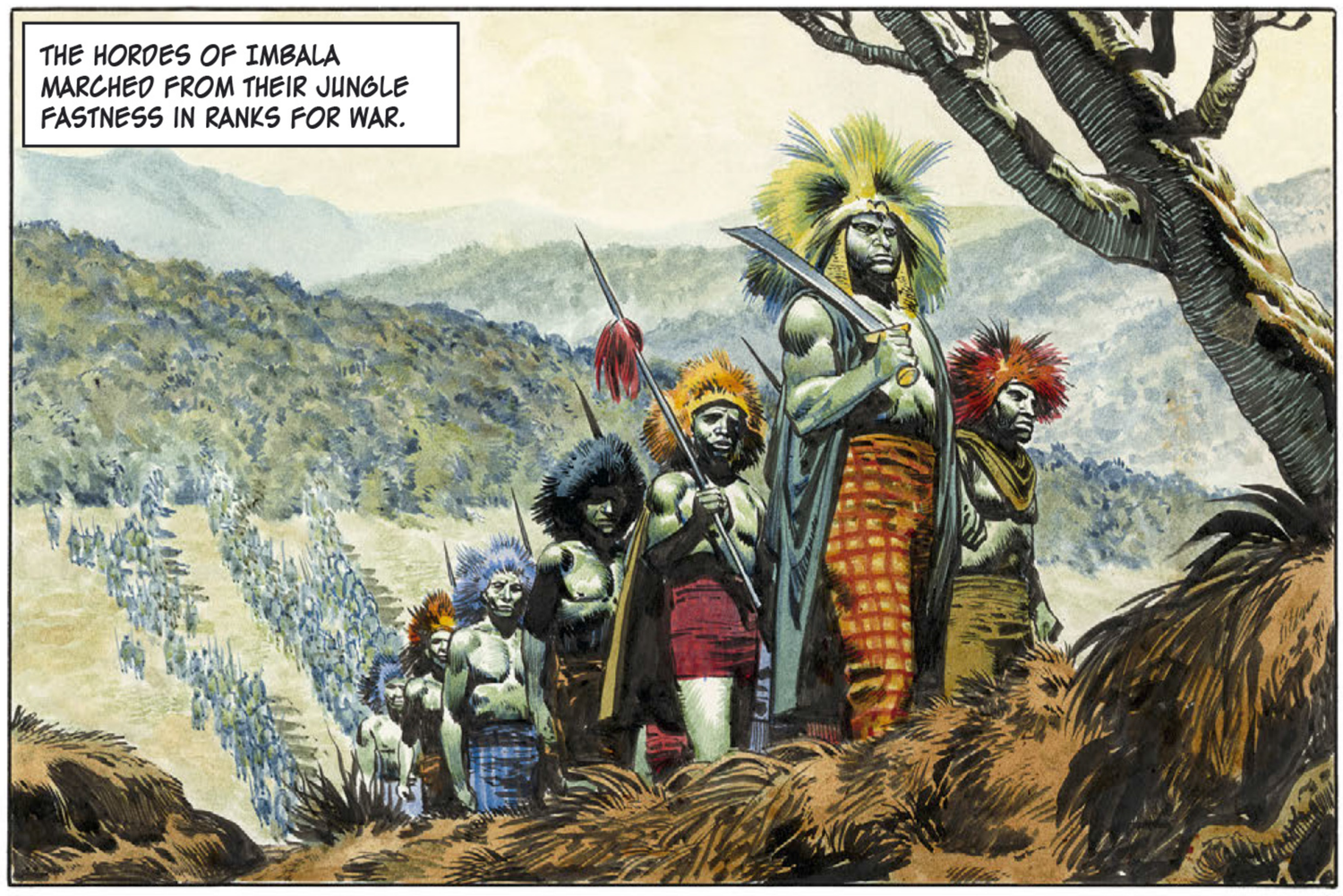

THE MAN'S LAST DESPERATE CRY ROUSED HIS COMRADES. DARK FIGURES CAME RUNNING FROM ALL SIDES...
WHAT WAS THAT?
THEY MUST NOT FIND ME HERE!

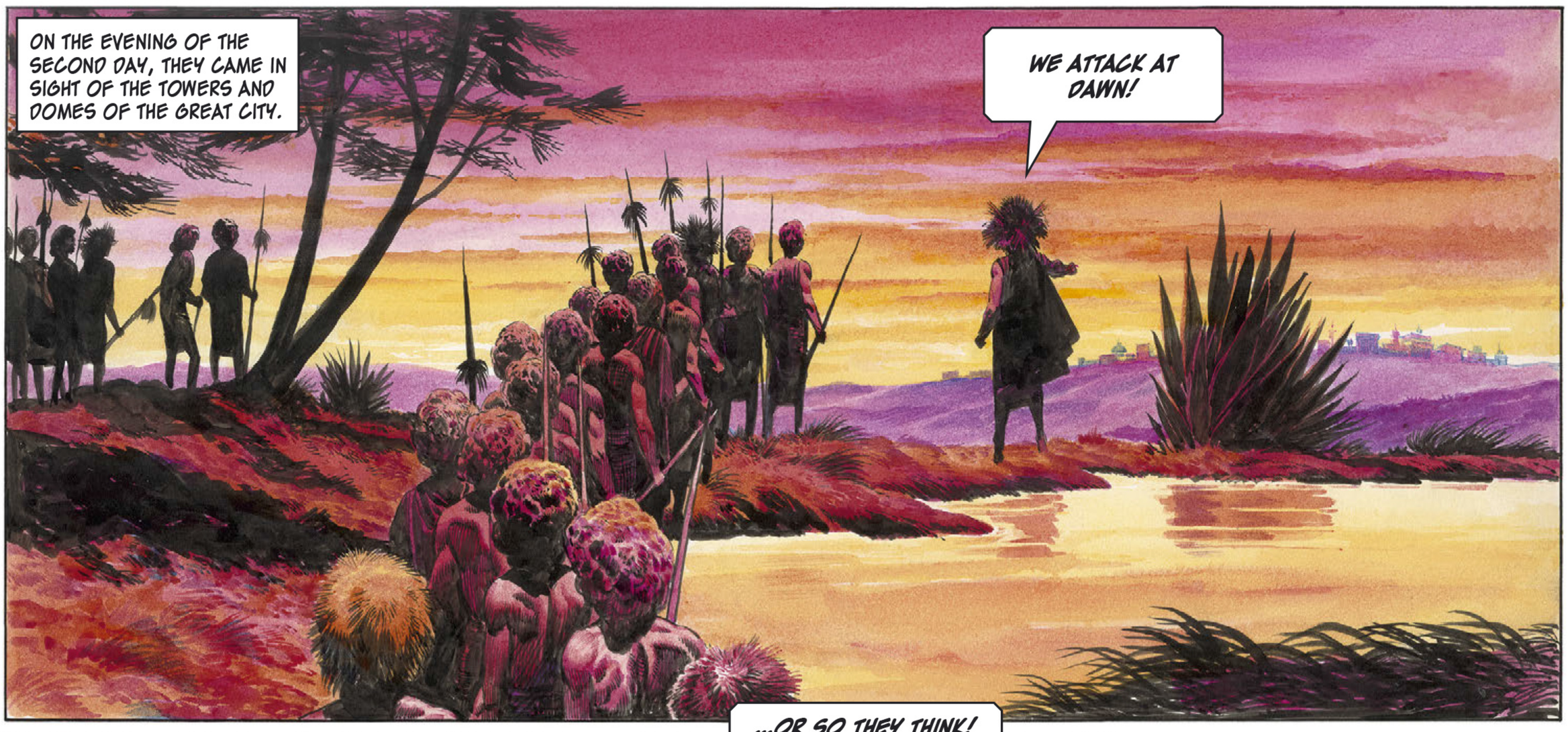
JANNO WAS BACK IN THE SQUARE AMONGST HIS OWN PEOPLE BY THE TIME VANNU JOINED THE THRONG OF LOKANS SURROUNDING THEIR STRICKEN COMRADE.
WE DON'T KNOW HOW IT HAPPENED, VANNU!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN ACCIDENT. WE HAVE NO ENEMIES IN THE CITY... ONLY THE MINDLESS TRIGANS!

JANNO WAS IN DESPAIR...
I'VE FAILED! NO USE TRYING AGAIN TO GET THE ANTIDOTE TONIGHT... THE WHOLE GARRISON IS AWAKE!

IN THE NIGHTMARE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, JANNO STOLE UNCONTAMINATED WATER FROM THE LOKANS... AND BIDED HIS TIME FOR A CHANCE TO LAY HANDS ON THE ANTIDOTE.
I DARE NOT TAKE ANY RISKS... I AM THE ONLY TRIGAN LEFT WITH A MEMORY AND A WILL!

IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE THE NEWS OF THE CAPTURE OF TRIGAN CITY WAS ALL OVER THE PLANET ELEKTON. IT PENETRATED THE DENSE JUNGLE OF DAVELI... WHERE KING IMBALA SWORE A MIGHTY OATH.
WE WILL MARCH TO AVENGE OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES THE TRIGANS! NO FOOD SHALL PASS OUR LIPS TILL I, IMBALA, HAVE DRIVEN THE EVIL LOKANS FROM TRIGAN CITY!


THE HORDES OF IMBALA MARCHED FROM THEIR JUNGLE FASTNESS IN RANKS FOR WAR.


ON THE EVENING OF THE SECOND DAY, THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF THE TOWERS AND DOMES OF THE GREAT CITY.
WE ATTACK AT DAWN!

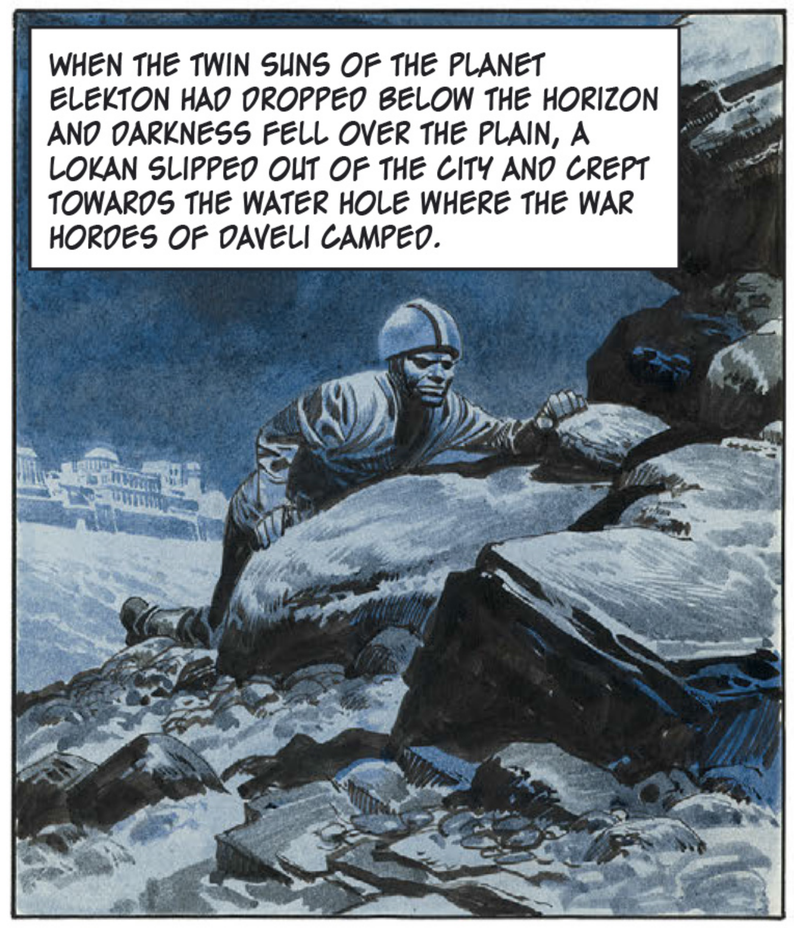
VANNU WATCHED FROM THE OPEN GATES OF THE CITY.
THEY ARE MAKING CAMP BY THE WATER HOLE, VANNU!
I KNOW THE METHODS OF THE DAVELI WAR HORDES... THEY WILL ATTACK AT DAWN, AS IS THEIR CUSTOM...

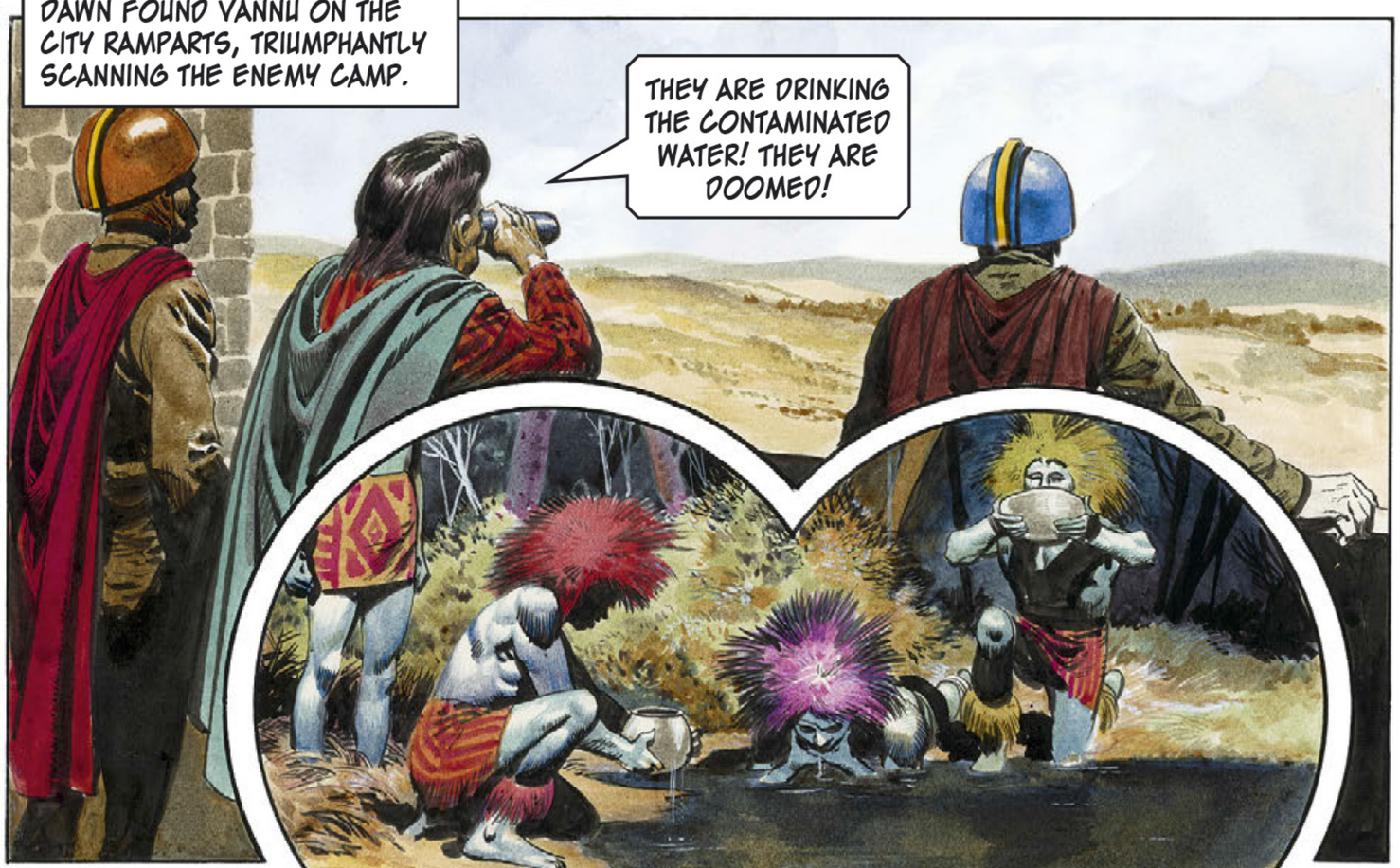
HE TOOK OUT A PHIAL OF CLEAR LIQUID.
...OR SO THEY THINK! WHEN IT IS DARK, YOU WILL STEAL OUT TO THEIR CAMP AND POUR THIS INTO THE WATER HOLE!

THEY WILL RISE AT DAWN AND DRINK TO REFRESH THEMSELVES FOR THE ATTACK... AND WHEN THE SUNS OF ELEKTON ARE HIGH IN THE SKY, I SHALL NOT ONLY BE EMPEROR OF TRIGAN BUT THE KING OF DAVELI!

VANNU POINTED TO THE DAVELI WAR HORDES, CAMPED ON THE PLAIN OUTSIDE THE CITY.
THERE WILL BE NO FIGHT TOMORROW! WHEN THE DAVELI WARRIORS HAVE DRUNK AT THE WATER HOLE, THEY WILL BECOME MINDLESS ANIMALS.

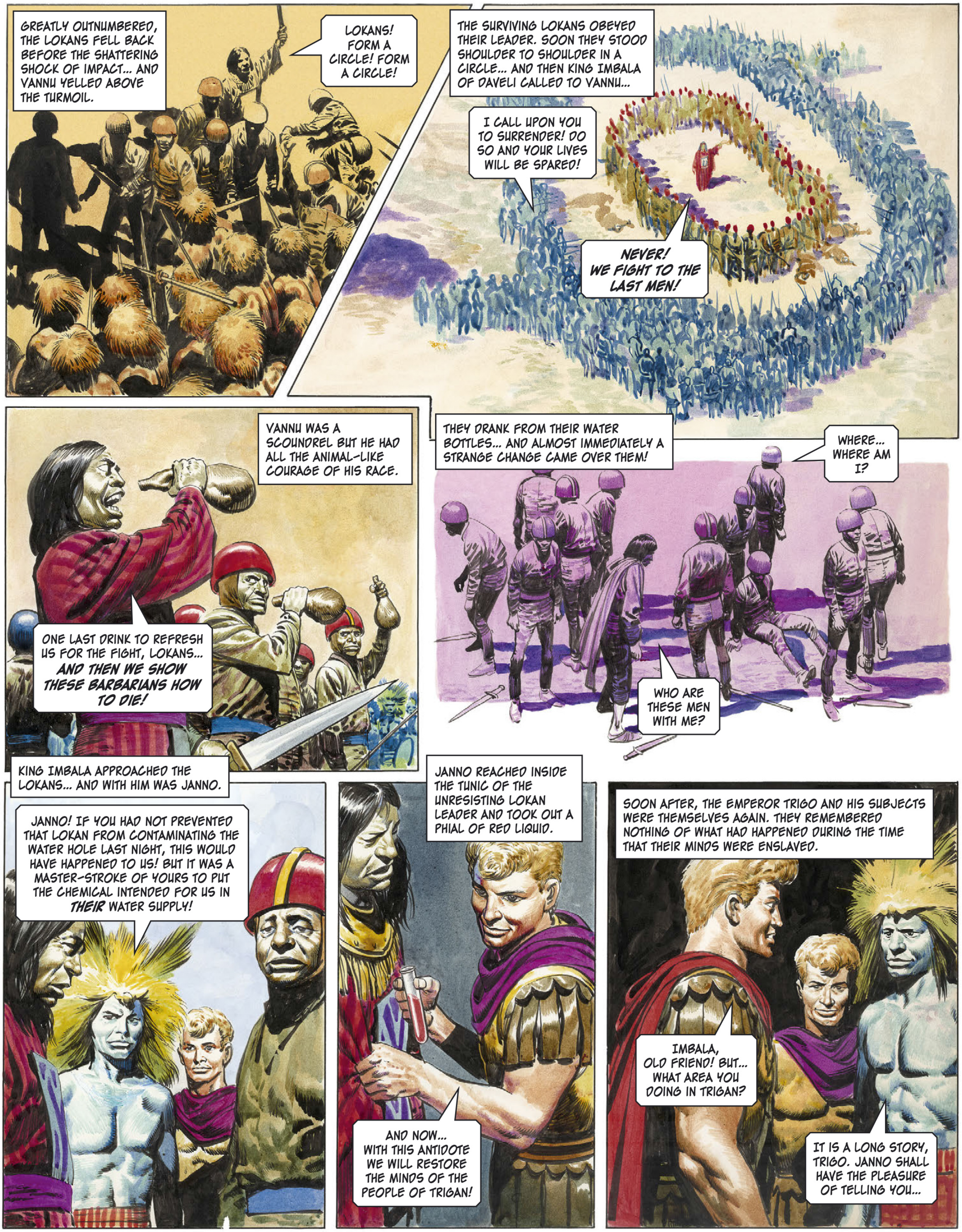
ALONE OF ALL THE CITIZENS OF TRIGAN, YOUNG JANNO HAD NOT DRUNK THE CONTAMINATED WATER... AND HE HEARD VANNU'S WORDS...
I MUST STOP THEIR FIENDISH PLAN... I MUST!


WHEN THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON HAD DROPPED BELOW THE HORIZON AND DARKNESS FELL OVER THE PLAIN, A LOKAN SLIPPED OUT OF THE CITY AND CREPT TOWARDS THE WATER HOLE WHERE THE WAR HORDES OF DAVELI CAMPED.


DAWN FOUND VANNU ON THE CITY RAMPARTS, TRIUMPHANTLY SCANNING THE ENEMY CAMP.
THEY ARE DRINKING THE CONTAMINATED WATER! THEY ARE DOOMED!

AFTER A SHORT WHILE, VANNU SWAGGERED OUT OF THE CITY AT THE HEAD OF HIS MEN.
THE CHEMICAL WILL HAVE TAKEN EFFECT BY NOW... THIS WILL NOT BE A FIGHT, IT WILL BE A MASSACRE!

BUT HE WAS MISTAKEN!
AAAAH! NO!
SOMETHING HAS GONE WRONG!
THE LOKANS APPROACHED THE CAMP, EXPECTING TO FIND THE DAVELI WARRIORS STANDING AROUND IN MINDLESS, BEWILDERED GROUPS... BUT–
HUM-HAH! DEATH TO THE LOKANS!


GREATLY OUTNUMBERED, THE LOKANS FELL BACK BEFORE THE SHATTERING SHOCK OF IMPACT... AND VANNU YELLED ABOVE THE TURMOIL.
LOKANS! FORM A CIRCLE! FORM A CIRCLE!
THE SURVIVING LOKANS OBEYED THEIR LEADER. SOON THEY STOOD SHOULDER TO SHOULDER IN A CIRCLE... AND THEN KING IMBALA OF DAVELI CALLED TO VANNU...
I CALL UPON YOU TO SURRENDER! DO SO AND YOUR LIVES WILL BE SPARED!
NEVER! WE FIGHT TO THE LAST MEN!
VANNU WAS A SCOUNDREL BUT HE HAD ALL THE ANIMAL-LIKE COURAGE OF HIS RACE.
ONE LAST DRINK TO REFRESH US FOR THE FIGHT, LOKANS... AND THEN WE SHOW THESE BARBARIANS HOW TO DIE!
THEY DRANK FROM THEIR WATER BOTTLES... AND ALMOST IMMEDIATELY A STRANGE CHANGE CAME OVER THEM!
WHERE... WHERE AM I?
WHO ARE THESE MEN WITH ME?
KING IMBALA APPROACHED THE LOKANS... AND WITH HIM WAS JANNO.
JANNO! IF YOU HAD NOT PREVENTED THAT LOKAN FROM CONTAMINATING THE WATER HOLE LAST NIGHT, THIS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO US! BUT IT WAS A MASTER-STROKE OF YOURS TO PUT THE CHEMICAL INTENDED FOR US IN THEIR WATER SUPPLY!
JANNO REACHED INSIDE THE TUNIC OF THE UNRESISTING LOKAN LEADER AND TOOK OUT A PHIAL OF RED LIQUID.
AND NOW... WITH THIS ANTIDOTE WE WILL RESTORE THE MINDS OF THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN!
SOON AFTER, THE EMPEROR TRIGO AND HIS SUBJECTS WERE THEMSELVES AGAIN. THEY REMEMBERED NOTHING OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED DURING THE TIME THAT THEIR MINDS WERE ENSLAVED.
IMBALA, OLD FRIEND! BUT... WHAT AREA YOU DOING IN TRIGAN?
IT IS A LONG STORY, TRIGO. JANNO SHALL HAVE THE PLEASURE OF TELLING YOU...

X

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE REVENGE OF DARAK

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 280 – 290

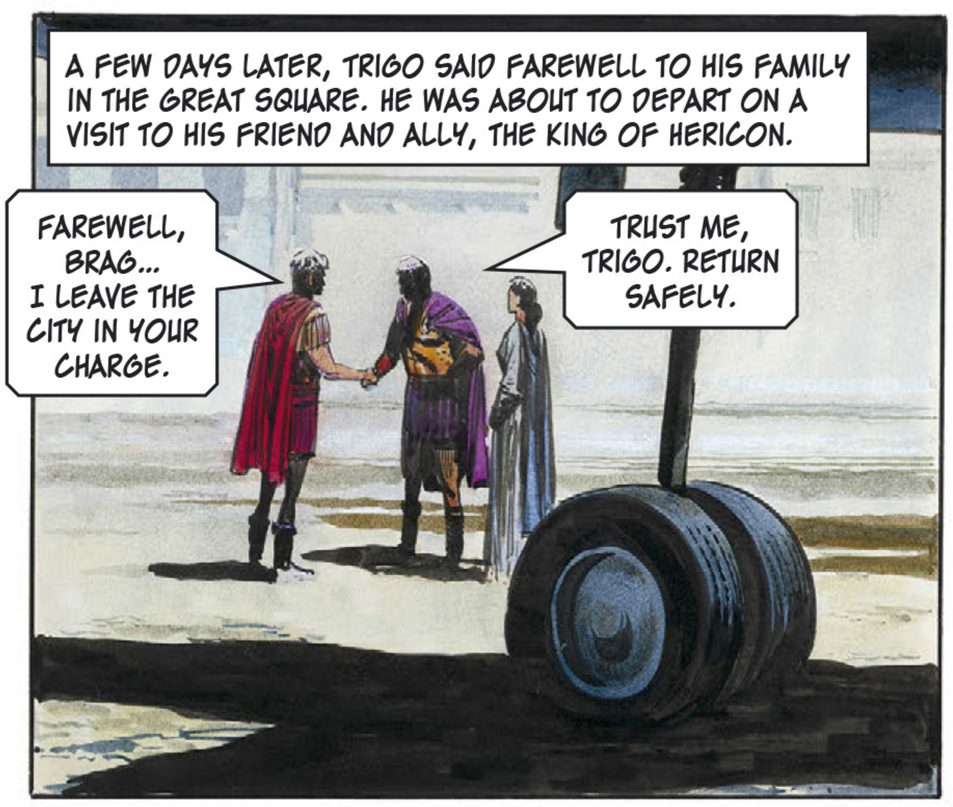
27th May – 5th August 1967

IT WAS THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF TRIGAN CITY. ALL EYES LOOKED UPWARDS IN AWE TO SEE THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET DIPPING IN SALUTE OVER THE GREAT SQUARE.
LATER, WHEN THE MASSED CRAFT HAD LANDED, THE EMPEROR TRIGO DECORATED THE CAPTAIN OF THE FLEET WITH A COLLAR OF PRECIOUS JEWELS.
CAPTAIN DARAK... AS THE COMMANDER OF MY AIR FLEET, I INVEST YOU WITH THE HIGHEST HONOUR OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE – THE COLLAR OF CELESTIAL STARS!
I THANK YOU, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
IN THE RANKS OF THE AIR FLEET PILOTS, YOUNG JANNO WHISPERED TO HIS FRIEND AND COMRADE KEREN...
DARAK IS ENJOYING THIS MOMENT!
HE WAS CONCEITED ENOUGH WITHOUT THE COLLAR OF CELESTIAL STARS... NOW WE'LL HAVE TO PAY TO SPEAK TO HIM!
CAPTAIN DARAK WAS INDEED A CONCEITED YOUNG MAN... AND HE WAS ALSO AMBITIOUS. THAT EVENING, IN HIS QUARTERS...
IT IS UNBELIEVABLE THAT I AM ONLY A CAPTAIN... WITH MY LOOKS AND ABILITIES, I COULD BE SO MUCH MORE... GIVEN THE CHANCE...
AN INSTANT LATER, HE DETECTED A MOVEMENT BEHIND THE CURTAIN. STRIDING SWIFTLY FORWARD, HE RIPPED IT ASIDE... TO DISCLOSE A SALLOW-FEATURED, GRINNING MAN...
A LOKAN CUR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM, LOKAN?
DON'T BE ANGRY, CAPTAIN... I HAVE BROUGHT YOU A GIFT!
A GIFT... FOR ME?
DARAK HAD CAUSE TO BE SUSPICIOUS. THE LOKANS NEVER CEASED TO PLOT REBELLION AGAINST THEIR CONQUERORS. DARAK'S VISITOR SPILLED THE CONTENTS OF A POUCH ON THE TABLE...
ERGALS! A FORTUNE IN PRECIOUS ERGALS!
THE RAREST JEWELS ON ELEKTON... AND ALL YOURS, CAPTAIN DARAK!

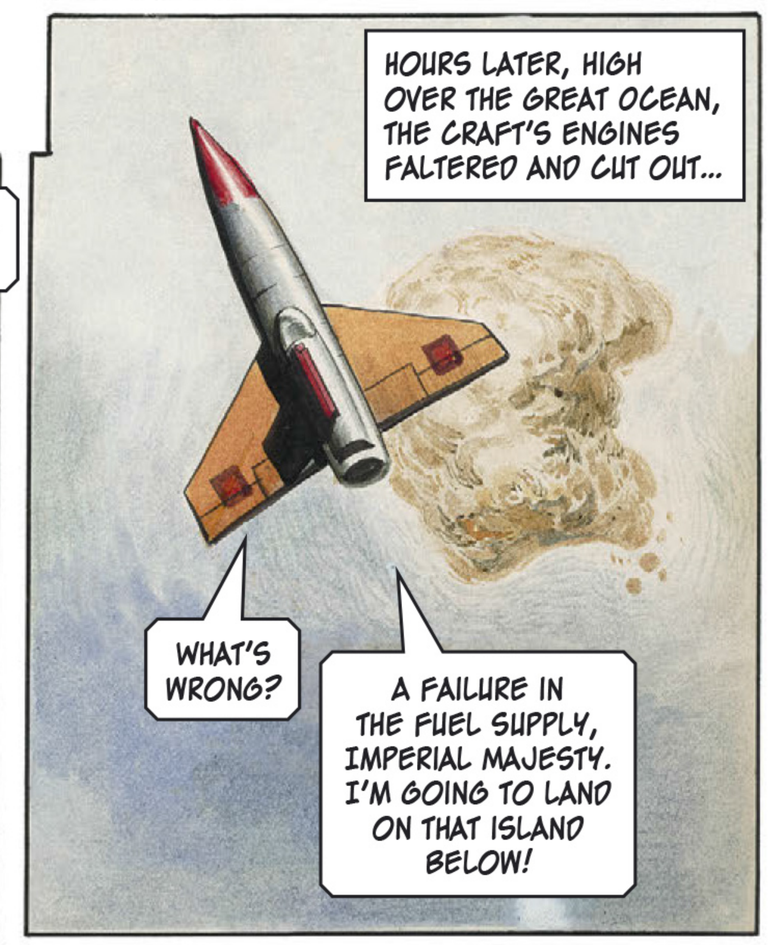
DARAK SNATCHED UP THE ERGALS WONDERINGLY... THEN HIS EXPRESSION CHANGED TO NARROW-EYED CUNNING.
WHY FOR ME?
I WILL LEAVE THAT QUESTION FOR THE MOMENT, CAPTAIN... AND TELL YOU THAT THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. IF YOU ACT WISELY THERE WILL BE MORE FOR YOU...

THINK OF IT, CAPTAIN... RICHES ENOUGH TO ALLOW YOU TO LEAVE TRIGAN AND GO ANYWHERE ON ELEKTON... FOUND AN EMPIRE OF YOUR OWN AND LIVE IN THE GREATNESS YOU DESERVE...

WHEN DARAK REPLIED, HIS VOICE WAS HUSKY WITH GREED AND EXCITEMENT.
TELL ME WHAT I MUST DO IN RETURN!
AAAAH! YOU ARE THE MAN I TOOK YOU FOR, CAPTAIN! WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO IS THIS... LISTEN CAREFULLY...

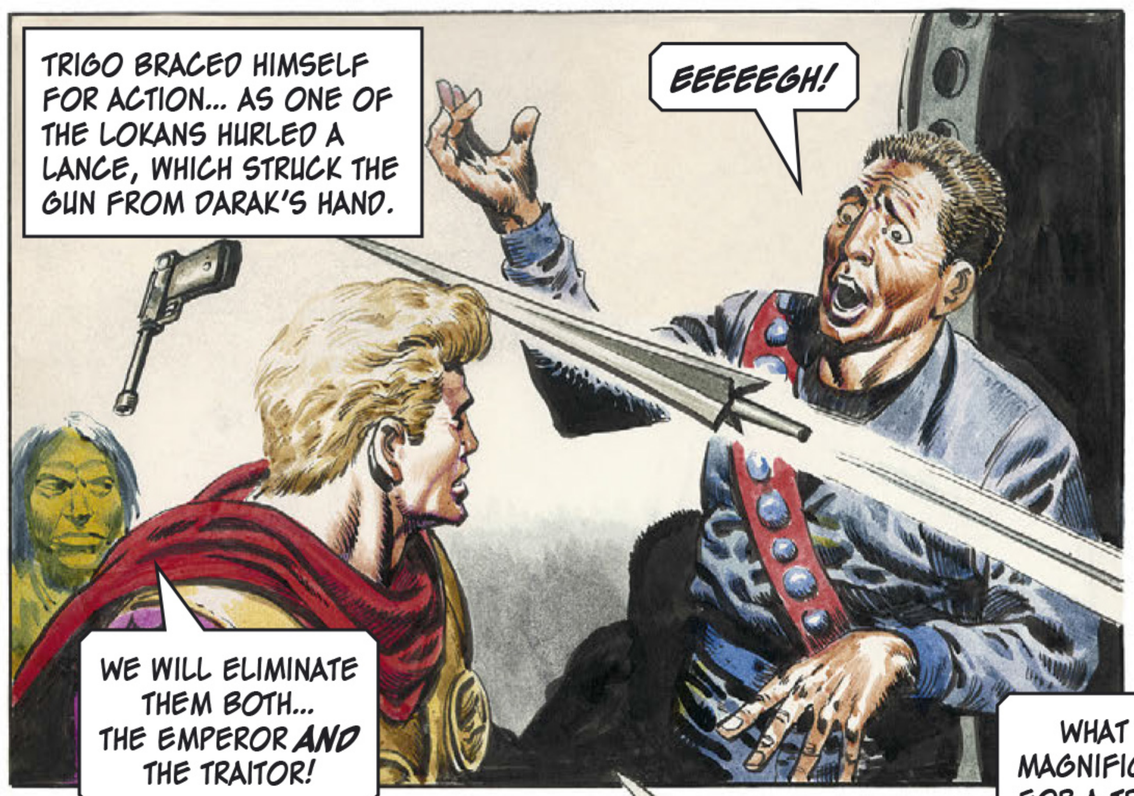

A FEW DAYS LATER, TRIGO SAID FAREWELL TO HIS FAMILY IN THE GREAT SQUARE. HE WAS ABOUT TO DEPART ON A VISIT TO HIS FRIEND AND ALLY, THE KING OF HERICON.
FAREWELL, BRAG... I LEAVE THE CITY IN YOUR CHARGE.
TRUST ME, TRIGO. RETURN SAFELY.

THE PILOT OF THE IMPERIAL CRAFT WAS... DARAK!
LET'S GO, CAPTAIN!


HOURS LATER, HIGH OVER THE GREAT OCEAN, THE CRAFT'S ENGINES FALTERED AND CUT OUT...
WHAT'S WRONG?
A FAILURE IN THE FUEL SUPPLY, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. I'M GOING TO LAND ON THAT ISLAND BELOW!

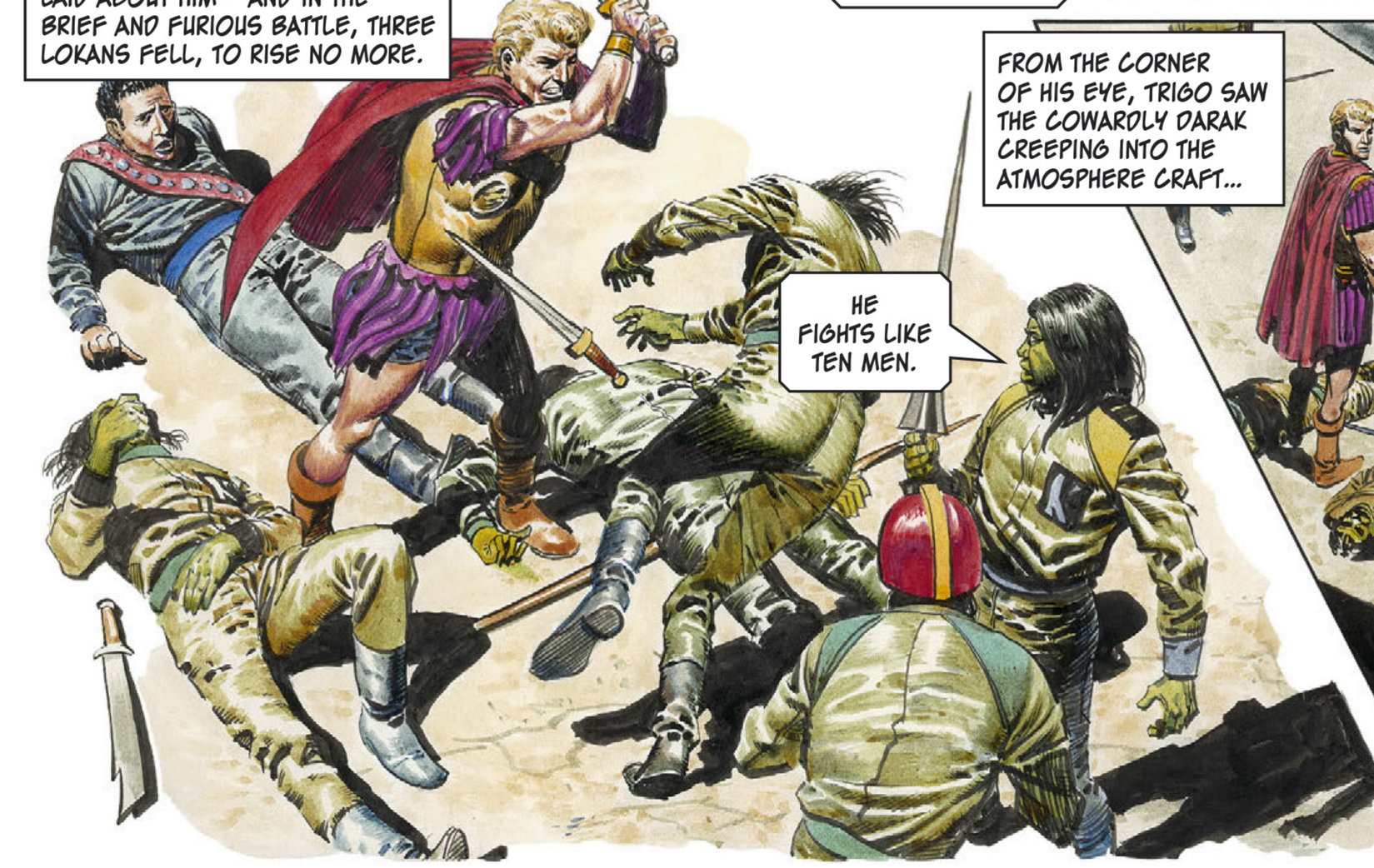
AS THE CRAFT SWOOPED DOWN TO LAND ON THE APPARENTLY DESERTED ISLAND, A PARTY OF ARMED MEN ROSE FROM HIDING... THEY WERE LOKANS!
HERE COMES THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS... DELIVERED INTO OUR HANDS!

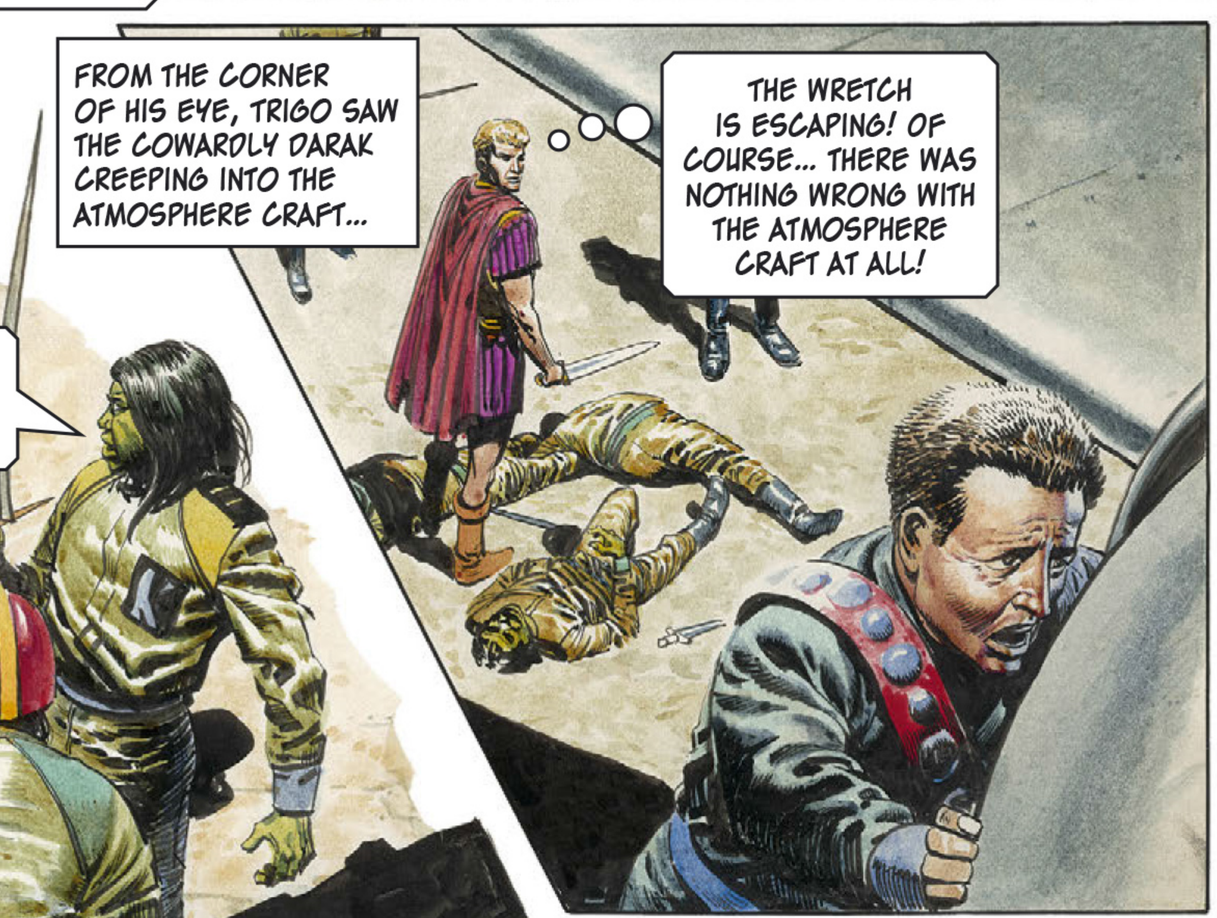
TRIGO WAS FIRST OUT OF THE CRAFT. WHEN HE SAW HIS PERIL, HIS HAND FLEW TO THE GUN AT HIS BELT... BUT IT WAS GONE!
I HAVE IT HERE... IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
BY ALL THE STARS!


TRIGO BRACED HIMSELF FOR ACTION... AS ONE OF THE LOKANS HURLED A LANCE, WHICH STRUCK THE GUN FROM DARAK'S HAND.
EEEEEGH!
WE WILL ELIMINATE THEM BOTH... THE EMPEROR AND THE TRAITOR!

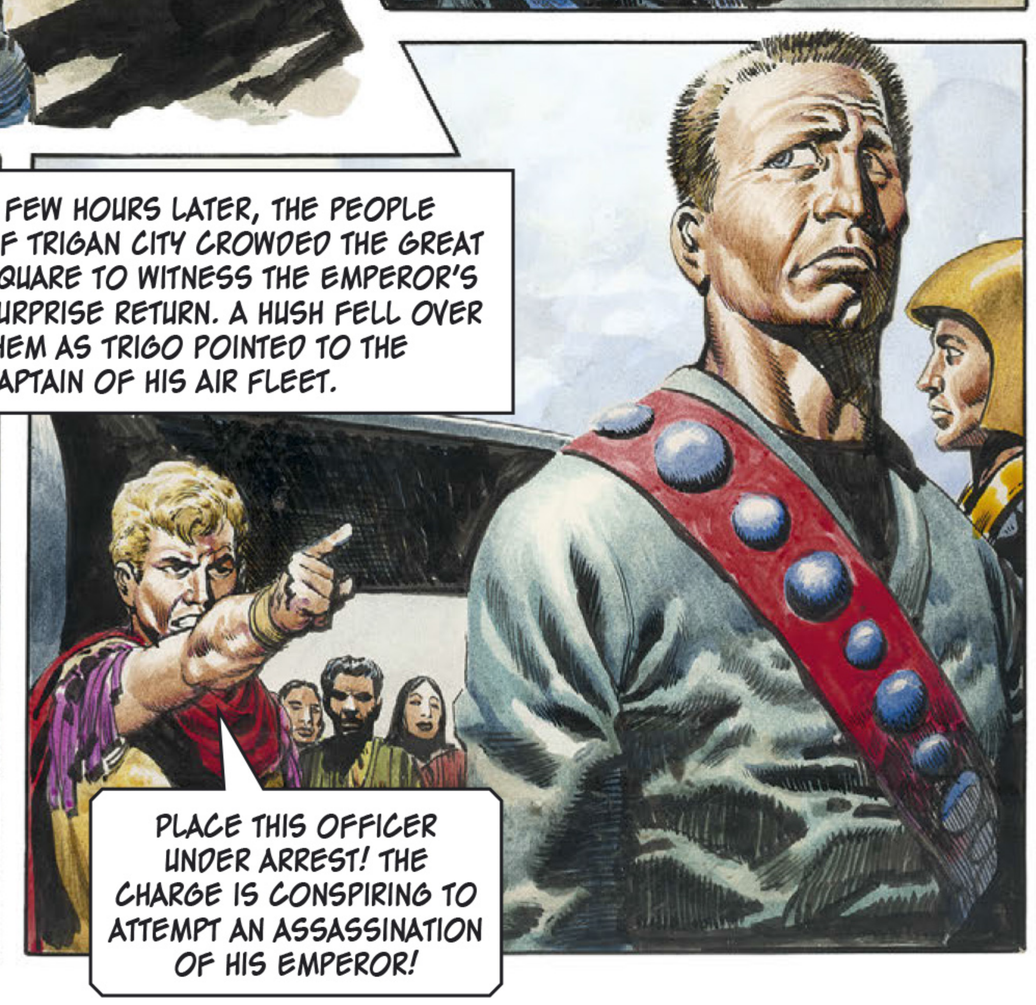
DARAK'S VOICE ROSE IN A PLEADING WAIL...
NO... NO! YOU MUSTN'T HARM ME! I DID AS YOU ORDERED... YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO PAY ME MAGNIFICENTLY!
WHAT MORE MAGNIFICENT WAY FOR A TRAITOR TO PAY THAN WITH HIS LIFE?

A KEEN-EDGED BLADE SLICED AT TRIGO... BUT THE FIGHTING EMPEROR DUCKED THE FATAL BLOW AND DROVE HIS MASSIVE FIST FORWARD!
UUUUGH!
BACK, YOU LOKAN CURS! MANY SHALL FALL BEFORE TRIGO FALLS!

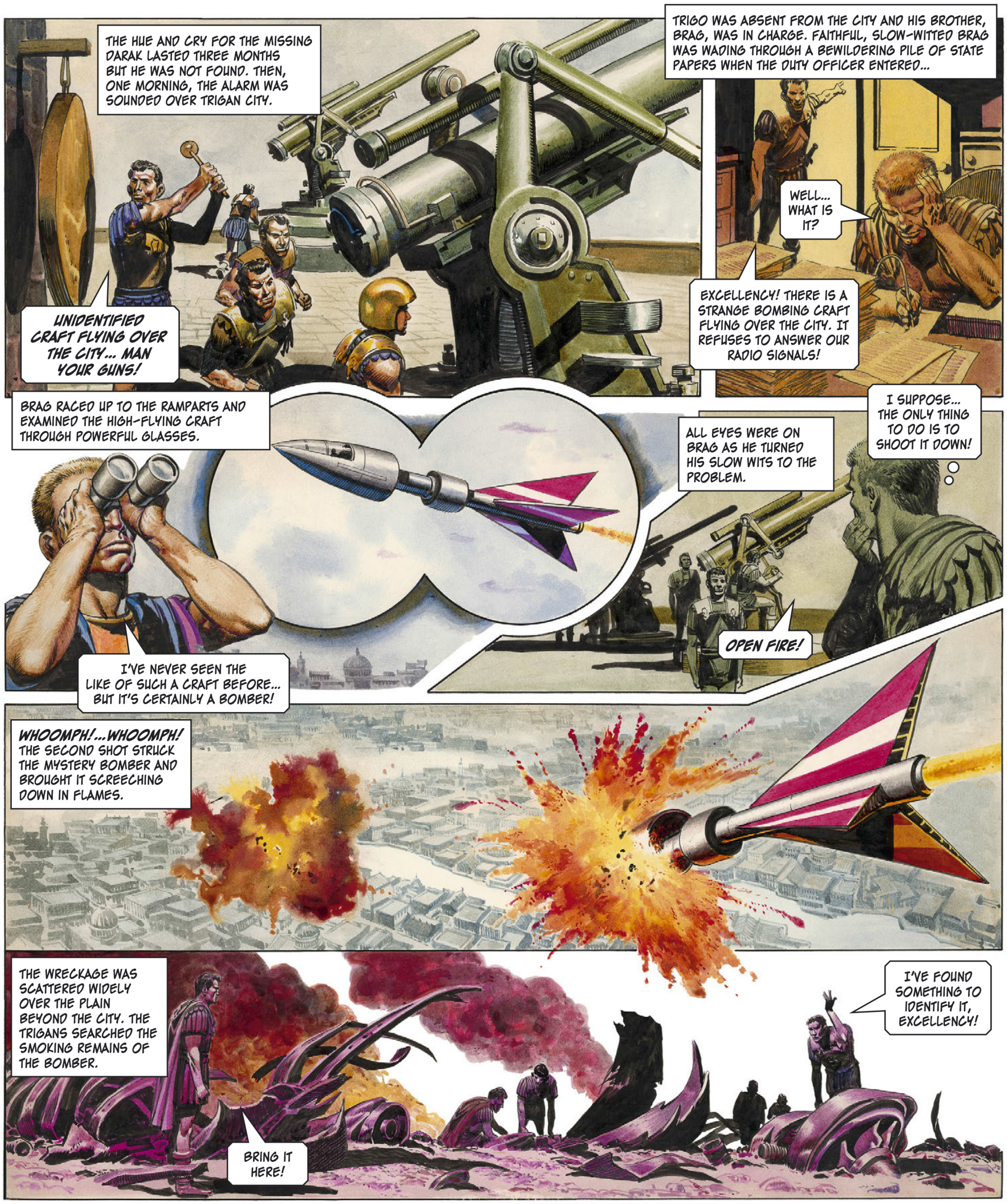

SNATCHING UP THE SWORD, TRIGO LAID ABOUT HIM – AND IN THE BRIEF AND FURIOUS BATTLE, THREE LOKANS FELL, TO RISE NO MORE.
HE FIGHTS LIKE TEN MEN.


FROM THE CORNER OF HIS EYE, TRIGO SAW THE COWARDLY DARAK CREEPING INTO THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT...
THE WRETCH IS ESCAPING! OF COURSE... THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT AT ALL!

A THROWN LANCE CLANGED AGAINST THE CRAFT AS TRIGO HURLED HIMSELF INSIDE AND SLAMMED THE HATCH BEHIND HIM.
GET THIS CRAFT INTO THE AIR... OR DIE!
THEY ARE ESCAPING!


A FEW HOURS LATER, THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN CITY CROWDED THE GREAT SQUARE TO WITNESS THE EMPEROR'S SURPRISE RETURN. A HUSH FELL OVER THEM AS TRIGO POINTED TO THE CAPTAIN OF HIS AIR FLEET.
PLACE THIS OFFICER UNDER ARREST! THE CHARGE IS CONSPIRING TO ATTEMPT AN ASSASSINATION OF HIS EMPEROR!

THE FORCE OF TRIGAN JUSTICE MOVED SWIFTLY AGAINST THE TRAITOR. THE FOLLOWING DAY, A JUNIOR OFFICER OF THE AIR FLEET, YOUNG JANNO, STRIPPED DARAK OF HIS BADGES AND DECORATIONS...
HEAVY MANACLES WERE RIVETED TO HIS WRISTS AND ANKLES...
HE WAS THEN LED AWAY TO THE DREADED MINES... TO LABOUR FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE WITH THE WORST CRIMINALS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
A YEAR PASSED... AND ONE NIGHT, A GUARD WAS DOING THE ROUNDS OF THE CONVICTS WHO LAY SLEEPING AFTER THEIR DAY OF BACKBREAKING WORK...
THEN... A CHAIN WAS WRAPPED AROUND HIS THROAT, CHOKING OFF HIS CRY!
MOMENTS LATER, THE GUARD'S KEY HAD FREED THE CONVICT FROM HIS SLEEPING COMPANIONS AND HE WAS CREEPING AWAY DOWN THE TUNNEL.
AND NOW... VENGEANCE!
I WILL STRIKE UNSUSPECTED, FOR NO ONE WILL RECOGNISE ME!
INDEED, A YEAR IN THE MINES HAD GREATLY CHANGED THE ONCE HANDSOME CAPTAIN DARAK!


THE HUE AND CRY FOR THE MISSING DARAK LASTED THREE MONTHS BUT HE WAS NOT FOUND. THEN, ONE MORNING, THE ALARM WAS SOUNDED OVER TRIGAN CITY.
UNIDENTIFIED CRAFT FLYING OVER THE CITY... MAN YOUR GUNS!
TRIGO WAS ABSENT FROM THE CITY AND HIS BROTHER, BRAG, WAS IN CHARGE. FAITHFUL, SLOW-WITTED BRAG WAS WADING THROUGH A BEWILDERING PILE OF STATE PAPERS WHEN THE DUTY OFFICER ENTERED...
WELL... WHAT IS IT?
EXCELLENCY! THERE IS A STRANGE BOMBING CRAFT FLYING OVER THE CITY. IT REFUSES TO ANSWER OUR RADIO SIGNALS!
BRAG RACED UP TO THE RAMPARTS AND EXAMINED THE HIGH-FLYING CRAFT THROUGH POWERFUL GLASSES.
I'VE NEVER SEEN THE LIKE OF SUCH A CRAFT BEFORE... BUT IT'S CERTAINLY A BOMBER!
ALL EYES WERE ON BRAG AS HE TURNED HIS SLOW WITS TO THE PROBLEM.
I SUPPOSE... THE ONLY THING TO DO IS TO SHOOT IT DOWN!
OPEN FIRE!
WHOOMPH!...WHOOMPH! THE SECOND SHOT STRUCK THE MYSTERY BOMBER AND BROUGHT IT SCREECHING DOWN IN FLAMES.
THE WRECKAGE WAS SCATTERED WIDELY OVER THE PLAIN BEYOND THE CITY. THE TRIGANS SEARCHED THE SMOKING REMAINS OF THE BOMBER.
I'VE FOUND SOMETHING TO IDENTIFY IT, EXCELLENCY!
BRING IT HERE!

IT WAS AN ENGINE NAME PLATE... AND BRAG'S HEART SANK WITHIN HIM WHEN HE SAW THAT THE WORDS WERE WRITTEN IN THE LANGUAGE OF HERICON!

WE HAVE SHOT DOWN A CRAFT OF A FRIENDLY NATION!

BY THE STARS... WHAT HAVE I DONE?

...AND WHAT IS TRIGO GOING TO SAY?

TRIGO WAS HASTILY RECALLED TO TRIGAN. GREAT WAS HIS FURY AGAINST HIS BROTHER.

BUNGLING FOOL! ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS SEND UP A CRAFT TO INVESTIGATE. IT WAS A NEW TYPE OF HERICON BOMBER THAT HAD LOST ITS WAY!

I- I HAD TO MAKE A HASTY DECISION... THE SAFETY OF THE CITY...

TRIGO'S FIST CRASHED AGAINST HIS BROTHER'S JAW AND SENT HIM REELING!

THICK-SKULLED DOLT! YOUR HASTY DECISION NEARLY EMBROILED US IN A WAR! THE HERICONS ARE FURIOUS!

BRAG REELED FROM THE EMPEROR'S ROOM BUT HIS MORTIFICATION WAS NOT FINISHED YET... HE OVERHEARD TWO GUARDS MUTTERING TOGETHER...

BRAG SHOULD BE SENT TO THE MINES FOR WHAT HE DID!

THE MAN'S A FOOL

TRIGO KNOWS HE'S A FOOL... BUT WHAT CAN HE DO ABOUT IT?

YOU CAN MAKE AS MANY MISTAKES AS YOU LIKE AND GET AWAY WITH IT... PROVIDED YOU'RE THE EMPEROR'S BROTHER!

SICK AT HEART, BRAG WENT TO HIS CHAMBER AND SHUT HIMSELF IN.

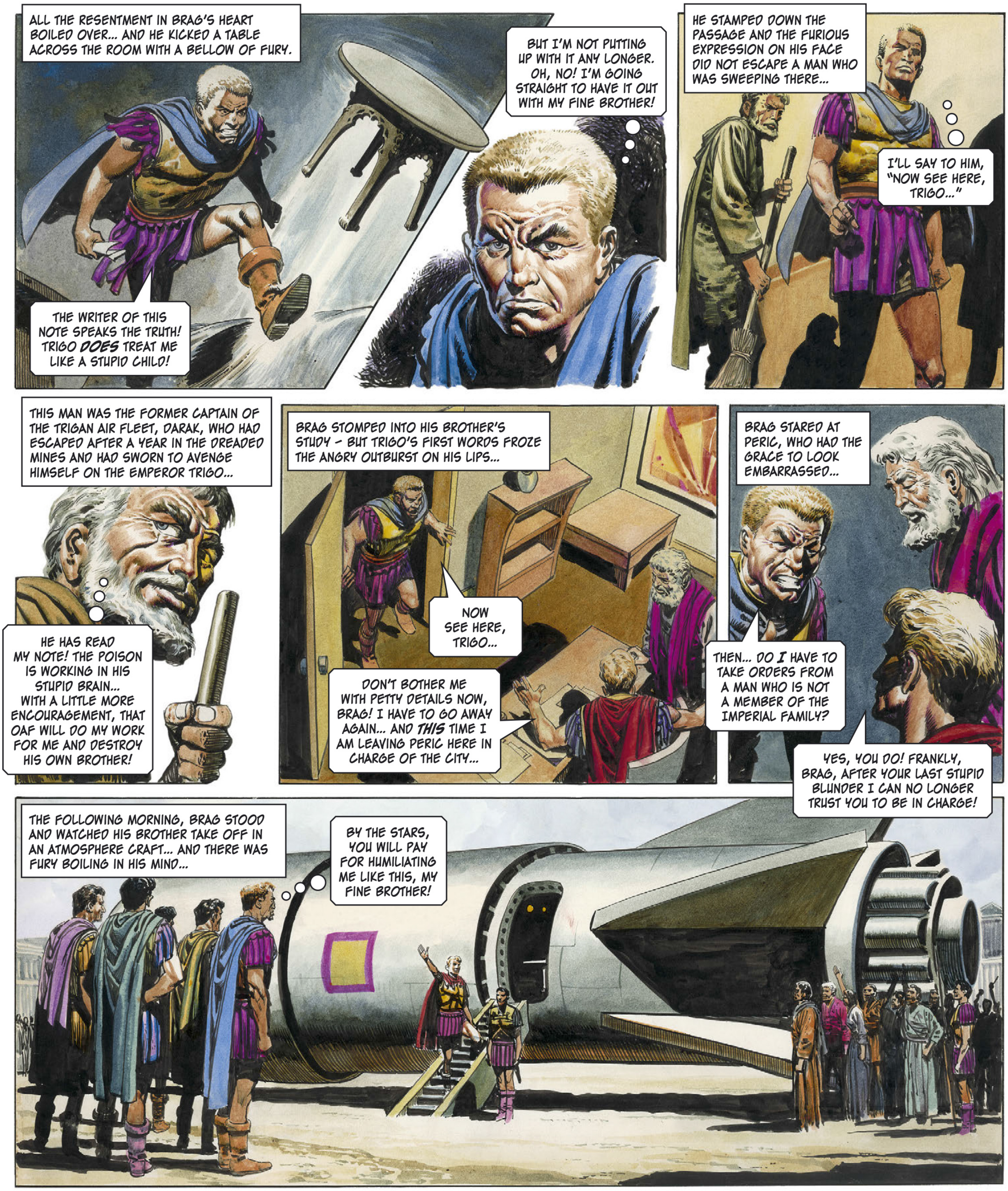
IS IT TRUE? DOES TRIGO REALLY THINK I'M A FOOL AND DOES HE ONLY PUT UP WITH ME BECAUSE WE'RE BROTHERS?

THEN... HE SAW A NOTE ON HIS COUCH...

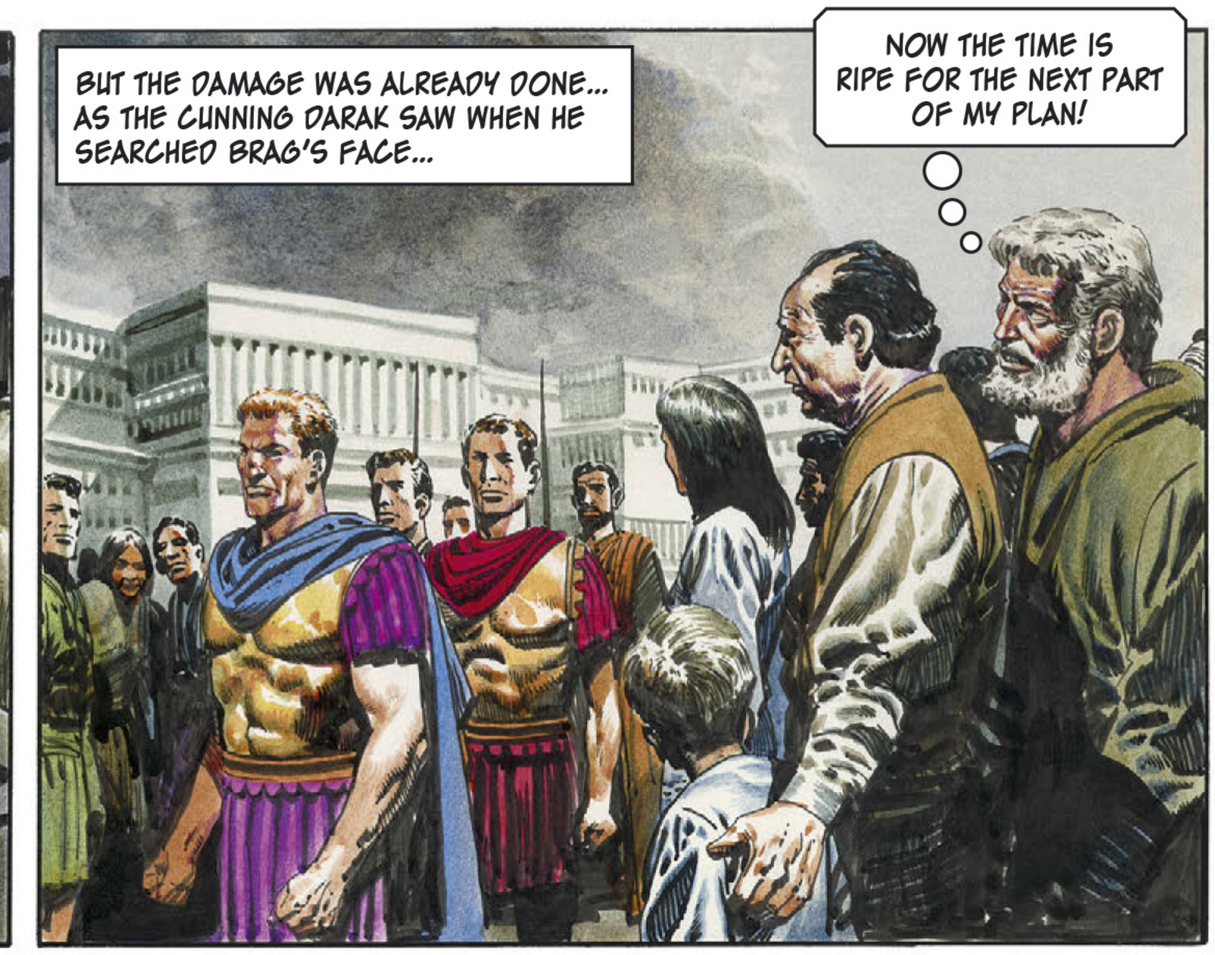
WHAT'S THIS?

THE MESSAGE WAS SHORT - AND CRUELLY MOCKING!

A *REAL* MAN WOULD NOT LET HIS BROTHER TREAT HIM LIKE A STUPID CHILD.


ALL THE RESENTMENT IN BRAG'S HEART BOILED OVER... AND HE KICKED A TABLE ACROSS THE ROOM WITH A BELLOW OF FURY.
THE WRITER OF THIS NOTE SPEAKS THE TRUTH! TRIGO DOES TREAT ME LIKE A STUPID CHILD!
BUT I'M NOT PUTTING UP WITH IT ANY LONGER. OH, NO! I'M GOING STRAIGHT TO HAVE IT OUT WITH MY FINE BROTHER!
HE STAMPED DOWN THE PASSAGE AND THE FURIOUS EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE DID NOT ESCAPE A MAN WHO WAS SWEEPING THERE...
I'LL SAY TO HIM, "NOW SEE HERE, TRIGO..."
THIS MAN WAS THE FORMER CAPTAIN OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET, DARAK, WHO HAD ESCAPED AFTER A YEAR IN THE DREADED MINES AND HAD SWORN TO AVENGE HIMSELF ON THE EMPEROR TRIGO...
HE HAS READ MY NOTE! THE POISON IS WORKING IN HIS STUPID BRAIN... WITH A LITTLE MORE ENCOURAGEMENT, THAT OAF WILL DO MY WORK FOR ME AND DESTROY HIS OWN BROTHER!
BRAG STOMPED INTO HIS BROTHER'S STUDY – BUT TRIGO'S FIRST WORDS FROZE THE ANGRY OUTBURST ON HIS LIPS...
NOW SEE HERE, TRIGO...
DON'T BOTHER ME WITH PETTY DETAILS NOW, BRAG! I HAVE TO GO AWAY AGAIN... AND THIS TIME I AM LEAVING PERIC HERE IN CHARGE OF THE CITY...
BRAG STARED AT PERIC, WHO HAD THE GRACE TO LOOK EMBARRASSED...
THEN... DO I HAVE TO TAKE ORDERS FROM A MAN WHO IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY?
YES, YOU DO! FRANKLY, BRAG, AFTER YOUR LAST STUPID BLUNDER I CAN NO LONGER TRUST YOU TO BE IN CHARGE!
THE FOLLOWING MORNING, BRAG STOOD AND WATCHED HIS BROTHER TAKE OFF IN AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT... AND THERE WAS FURY BOILING IN HIS MIND...
BY THE STARS, YOU WILL PAY FOR HUMILIATING ME LIKE THIS, MY FINE BROTHER!

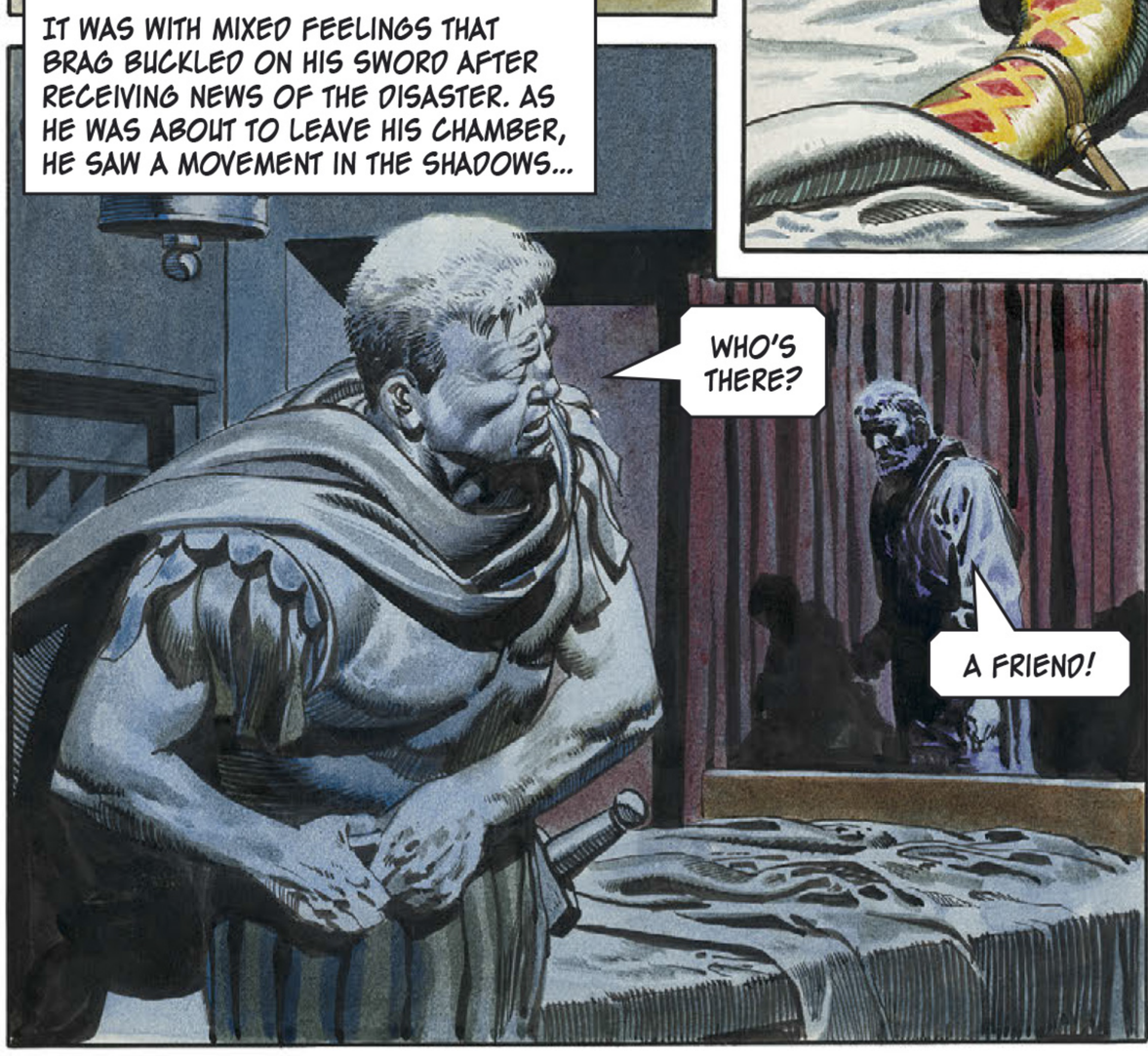
THE PILOT OF THE IMPERIAL CRAFT WAS BRAG'S OWN SON, JANNO. AS THEY SWEPT OVER THE CITY, TRIGO CONFIDED IN HIS FAVOURITE NEPHEW...
I HAVE BEEN THOUGHTLESSLY HARSH TO YOUR FATHER, JANNO... APART FROM BEING MY BROTHER, HE IS MY DEAREST AND MOST FAITHFUL FRIEND... HOW I WISH I HAD TAKEN HIM BY THE HAND AND APOLOGISED FOR MY RUDENESS...


BUT THE DAMAGE WAS ALREADY DONE... AS THE CUNNING DARAK SAW WHEN HE SEARCHED BRAG'S FACE...
NOW THE TIME IS RIPE FOR THE NEXT PART OF MY PLAN!

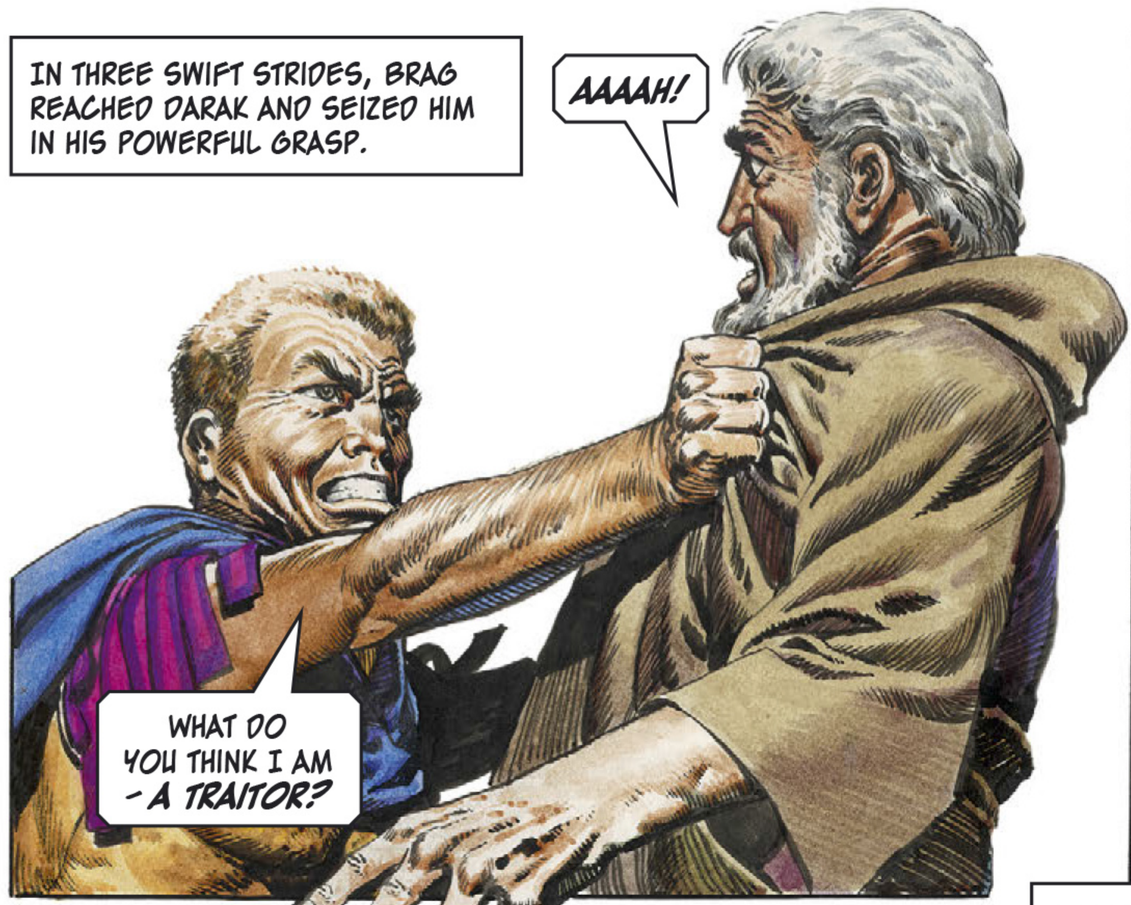
THAT NIGHT, OLD PERIC RETIRED EARLY TO HIS BED. PERIC WAS A WORRIED MAN...
FOR ALL HIS FAULTS, BRAG IS A SPLENDID FELLOW AT HEART... TOMORROW, I MUST HAVE A WORD WITH HIM AND SOFTEN THE BLOW...

THE THING THAT WAS TETHERED THERE BY ITS WHIP-LIKE TAIL WAS A NOBRA - ONE OF THE DEADLIEST SERPENTS ON THE PLANET ELEKTON!
AAAAAAGH!

IN NO TIME, THE PALACE WAS IN AN UPROAR.
HAS A DOCTOR BEEN SENT FOR?
HOW IS PERIC?
UNCONSCIOUS!
BRAG MUST BE INFORMED AT ONCE!


IT WAS WITH MIXED FEELINGS THAT BRAG BUCKLED ON HIS SWORD AFTER RECEIVING NEWS OF THE DISASTER. AS HE WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE HIS CHAMBER, HE SAW A MOVEMENT IN THE SHADOWS...
WHO'S THERE?
A FRIEND!

IT WAS... DARAK!
I HAVE COME TO TELL YOU THAT WITH ONE BOLD MOVE YOU CAN BE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS!

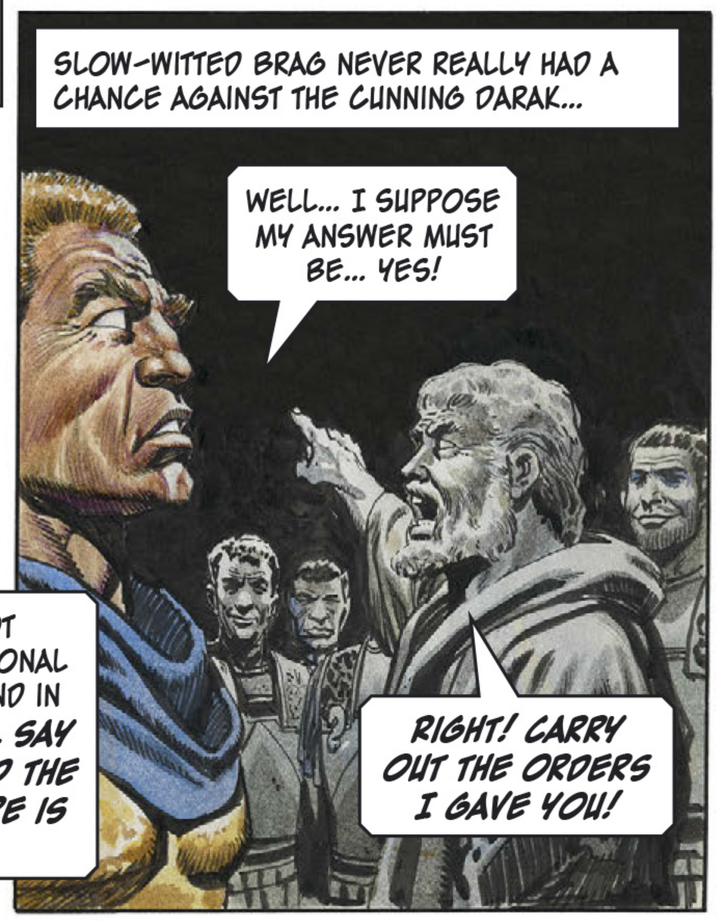

IN THREE SWIFT STRIDES, BRAG REACHED DARAK AND SEIZED HIM IN HIS POWERFUL GRASP.
AAAAH!
WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM - A TRAITOR?

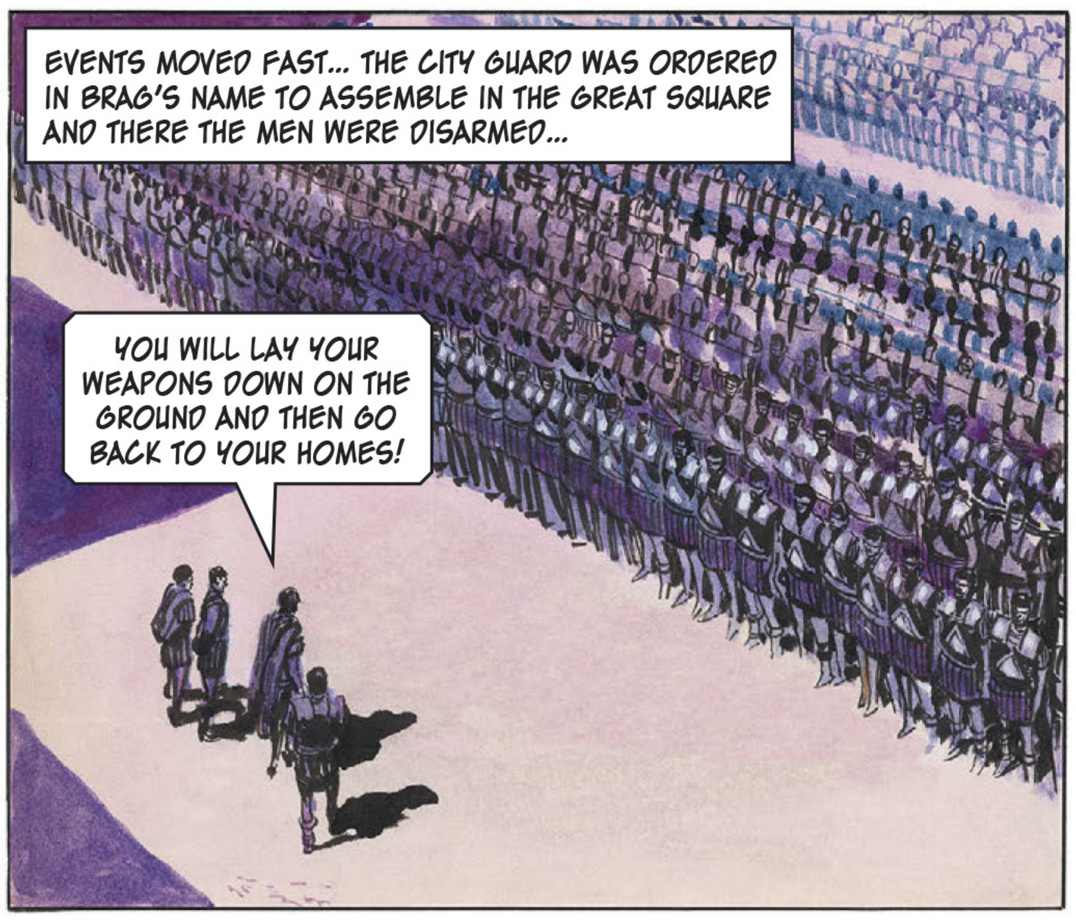
DARAK THOUGHT FAST...
NO! YOU ARE A LOYAL TRIGAN... AND SO ARE MY FRIENDS AND I... WHICH IS WHY WE WANT YOU TO BE EMPEROR INSTEAD OF YOUR BROTHER!

IS THIS TRUE? ARE THERE REALLY SOME WHO WOULD RATHER HAVE ME AS EMPEROR?
COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF, EXCELLENCY!

DARAK LED HIM OUT TO THE CORRIDOR, WHERE A GROUP OF GUARDS WERE WAITING. BRAG WAS NOT TO KNOW THAT THESE WERE THE RIFF-RAFF OF THE TRIGAN ARMY, MEN WHO WOULD SELL THEIR OWN FATHERS INTO SLAVERY... AND ALL IN DARAK'S PAY...
BRAG FOR EMPEROR! GIVE THE ORDER AND WE WILL FOLLOW YOU!

AFTER A LIFETIME OF TAKING SECOND PLACE TO HIS BRILLIANT BROTHER, THESE SHOUTS WERE MUSIC TO BRAG'S EARS.
IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE THING FOR A MAN TO OVERTHROW HIS BROTHER, BUT...
YOU CANNOT LET YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS STAND IN THE WAY! NOW... SAY THE WORD AND THE TRIGAN EMPIRE IS YOURS!


SLOW-WITTED BRAG NEVER REALLY HAD A CHANCE AGAINST THE CUNNING DARAK...
WELL... I SUPPOSE MY ANSWER MUST BE... YES!
RIGHT! CARRY OUT THE ORDERS I GAVE YOU!


EVENTS MOVED FAST... THE CITY GUARD WAS ORDERED IN BRAG'S NAME TO ASSEMBLE IN THE GREAT SQUARE AND THERE THE MEN WERE DISARMED...
YOU WILL LAY YOUR WEAPONS DOWN ON THE GROUND AND THEN GO BACK TO YOUR HOMES!

SIMILARLY, THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET WAS DISBANDED...
YOU WILL LEAVE YOUR CRAFT WHERE THEY ARE AND RETURN TO YOUR HOMES!

HAVING GAINED CONTROL OF THE CITY WITHOUT HAVING TO STRIKE A BLOW, DARAK'S MEN DROVE THROUGH THE STREETS...
ALL CITIZENS WILL MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE GREAT SQUARE!
BRAG HAD WATCHED ALL THIS FROM THE RAMPARTS OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE AND HIS CONSCIENCE WAS TROUBLING HIM.
AND NOW... IT IS JUST A MATTER OF PROCLAIMING YOU TO THE PEOPLE AS THE NEW EMPEROR!
BRAG SHOOK HIS HEAD.
NO! I'VE THOUGHT IT OVER... I CAN'T DO THIS THING!
TOO LATE FOR SQUEAMISHNESS, BRAG... YOU HAVE ALREADY DONE IT!
AND SO, THE TREACHEROUS DARAK READ OUT THE PROCLAMATION TO THE DUMBFOUNDED PEOPLE... AND NO-ONE COULD SEE THE PISTOL AIMED AGAINST THE BACK OF THE UNWILLING BRAG!
...AND SO BRAG BECOMES THE EMPEROR OF TRIGAN AND ALL ITS POSSESSIONS ON THE PLANET ELEKTON! LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!
THERE WAS AN INSTANT OF THUNDERSTRUCK SILENCE FROM THE ASSEMBLED CITIZENS... AND THEN - PANDEMONIUM!
WE DON'T WANT THAT STUPID ANIMAL! TRIGO'S OUR EMPEROR! DOWN WITH BRAG!
OPEN FIRE ON THE RABBLE!
DARAK SNARLED A SAVAGE COMMAND!
NO!
SILENCE! YOU DON'T GIVE THE ORDERS HERE!

A HAIL OF GUNFIRE TORE INTO THE MASS OF UNARMED CITIZENS AND THEY FLED IN CONFUSION.
AAAAAAH!
DARAK GRINNED WITH SATISFACTION.
CEASE FIRING... THAT HAS TAUGHT THE RABBLE A LESSON!
HE TURNED MOCKINGLY TO BRAG.
TCH! TCH! IS THAT THE WAY FOR HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY TO ADDRESS HIS MOST FAITHFUL SERVANT? NOW... IF YOU WILL BE SO GRACIOUS AS TO STEP THIS WAY, THERE ARE IMPORTANT MATTERS OF STATE REQUIRING ATTENTION...
YOU FIEND!
BRAG WAS TAKEN AT GUN POINT TO THE EMPEROR'S STUDY.
THIS IS A PROCLAMATION HANDING OVER COMMAND OF THE LAND, SEA AND AIR FORMATIONS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE INTO MY PERSONAL COMMAND. YOU WILL SIGN IT AS EMPEROR... NOW!
NEVER!
NEVER IS A LONG TIME, MY FRIEND. I THINK YOU WILL CHANGE YOUR MIND QUITE QUICKLY!
THERE WAS A VERMIN-INFESTED DUNGEON FAR BELOW THE IMPERIAL PALACE, KEPT ONLY FOR THE MOST DESPERATE AND HARDENED PRISONERS... AND IT WAS IN THERE THAT THEY THREW THE NEW "EMPEROR" OF TRIGAN...
WHEN YOUR THROAT IS PARCHED WITH THIRST AND YOUR WHOLE BODY SCREAMS OUT FOR LACK OF FOOD, ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS CALL OUT AND EVERYTHING YOU DESIRE SHALL BE YOURS... IF YOU SIGN!

DURING THE COURSE OF THAT FIRST FATEFUL DAY OF BRAG'S ILL-STARRED "REIGN", A GROUP OF LOYAL CITIZENS OF TRIGAN MANAGED TO STEAL AWAY FROM THE CITY IN A CAPTURED ATMOSPHERE CRAFT. THEY WENT TO HERICON, WHERE TRIGO WAS VISITING KING KASSAR.
PROCLAIMED HIMSELF EMPEROR, YOU SAY? MY OWN BROTHER!
YES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY... AND WHEN THE PEOPLE OBJECTED, HE ORDERED THE GUARDS TO FIRE ON THEM!
TRIGO TURNED TO HIS NEPHEW, JANNO.
DO YOU HEAR THAT?
I DON'T BELIEVE IT, UNCLE... MY FATHER WOULD NEVER DO SUCH A THING!
THE WARLIKE KING KASSAR SEEMED TO FIND GRIM AMUSEMENT IN THE SITUATION.
WELL, TRIGO... IT APPEARS THAT I SHALL HAVE TO INVADE YOUR EMPIRE AND WIN IT BACK FOR YOU - AND I'M AFRAID THAT A LOT OF YOUR PEOPLE ARE GOING TO GET KILLED IN THE PROCESS!
THAT NIGHT, YOUNG JANNO CREPT UNOBSERVED INTO HIS CRAFT.
IF MY UNCLE KNEW WHAT I WAS DOING HE WOULD THINK MY INTENTION WAS TO JOIN MY FATHER IN REBELLION AGAINST HIM!
THE SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WERE HIGH IN THE SKY WHEN JANNO LANDED IN TRIGAN CITY AND SNAPPED TO A GRINNING REBEL GUARD.
TAKE ME TO MY FATHER!
WELL... IT'S THE YOUNG SPRIG HIMSELF! STEP THIS WAY, MY LORD, AND WE'LL SEE IF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY ISN'T TOO BUSY TO SEE YOU!
FULL OF UNEASE, JANNO LET HIMSELF BE LED INTO THE IMPERIAL PALACE. A FEW MINUTES LATER, HE WAS BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH BRAG.
JANNO... OH, NO... NO!
FATHER!
A BEAUTIFUL REUNION! AND NOW, I THINK HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY WILL BE QUITE EASILY PERSUADED TO SIGN THE PROCLAMATION!

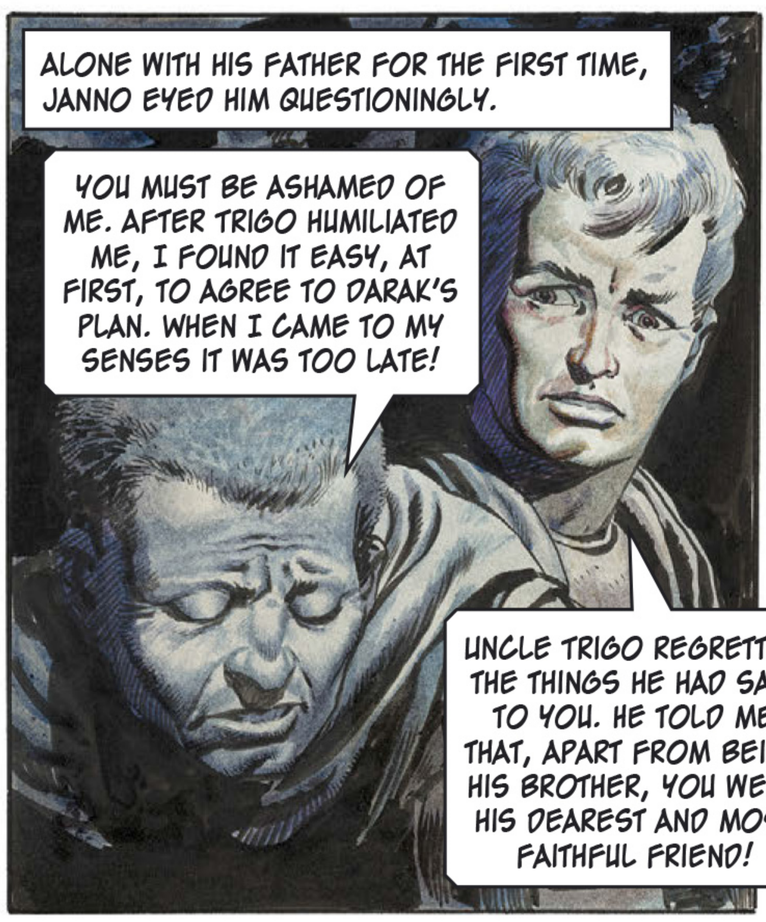
AT A HARSH ORDER FROM DARAK, ONE OF THE GUARDS DREW HIS KEEN-EDGED BLADE.
TAKE YOUR SWORD AND CUT DOWN THAT YOUNG SPRIG!

JANNO SAW THE WEAPON RAISED ON HIGH ABOVE HIM... AND HE FACED HIS FATE UNFLINCHINGLY.

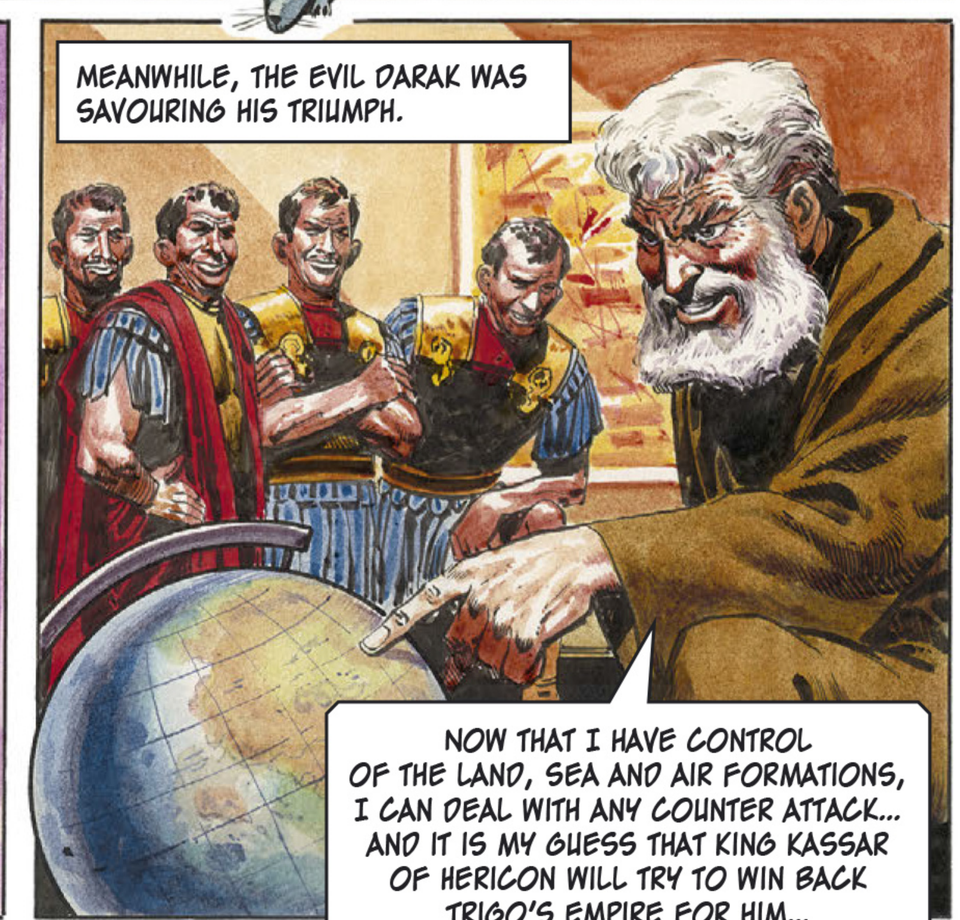
THEN HIS FATHER'S ANGUISHED VOICE RANG OUT!
NO! SPARE MY SON... I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU DEMAND!

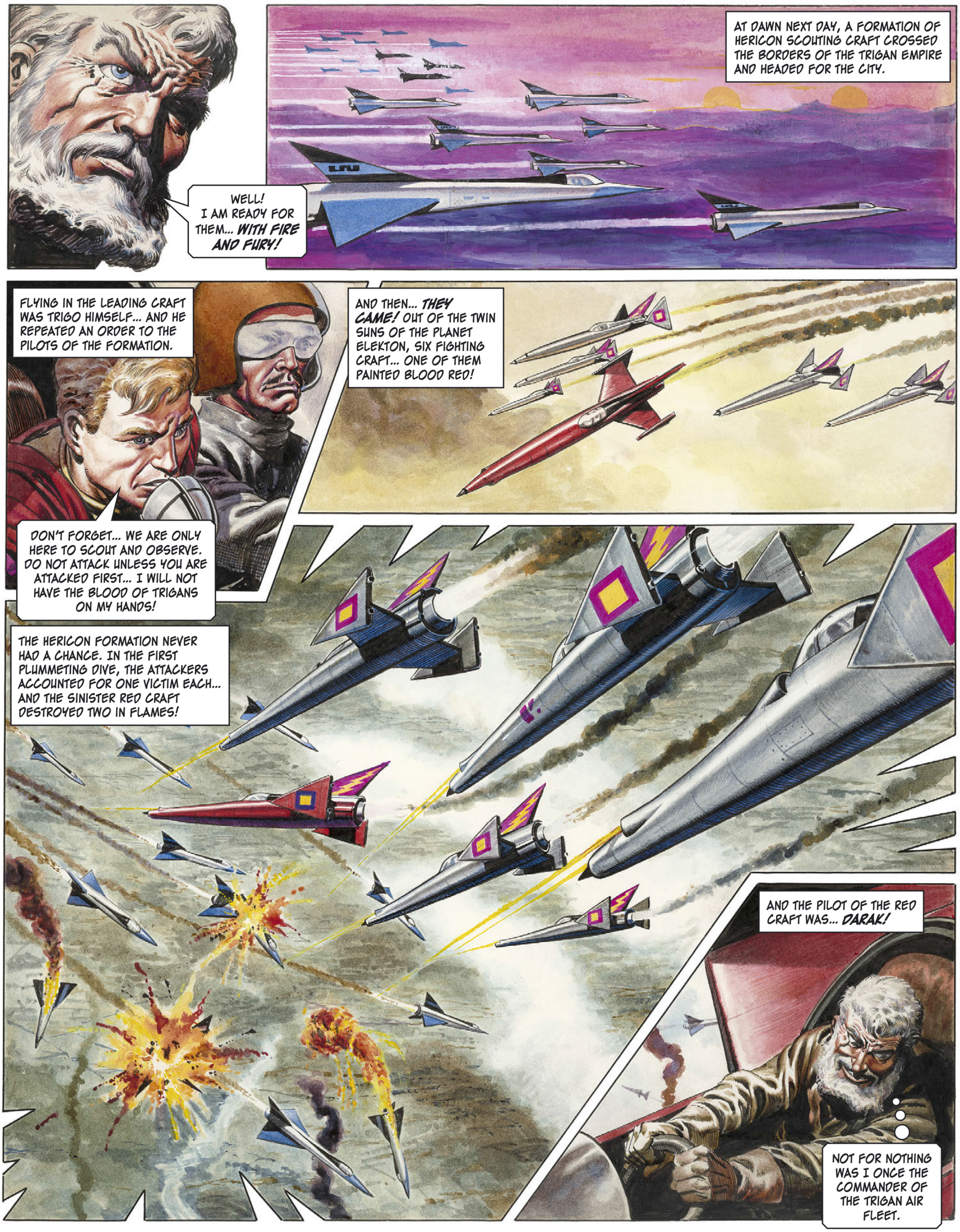
AND SO, THE UNWILLING "EMPEROR" OF TRIGAN SIGNED THE FATEFUL PROCLAMATION WHICH GAVE COMMAND OF THE ARMED FORCES INTO THE EVIL HANDS OF DARAK.
FOR A SLOW-WITTED MAN YOU ACTED WITH GREAT SPEED AND GOOD SENSE, BRAG... DID I NOT TELL YOU THAT I WOULD PERSUADE YOU IN THE END?

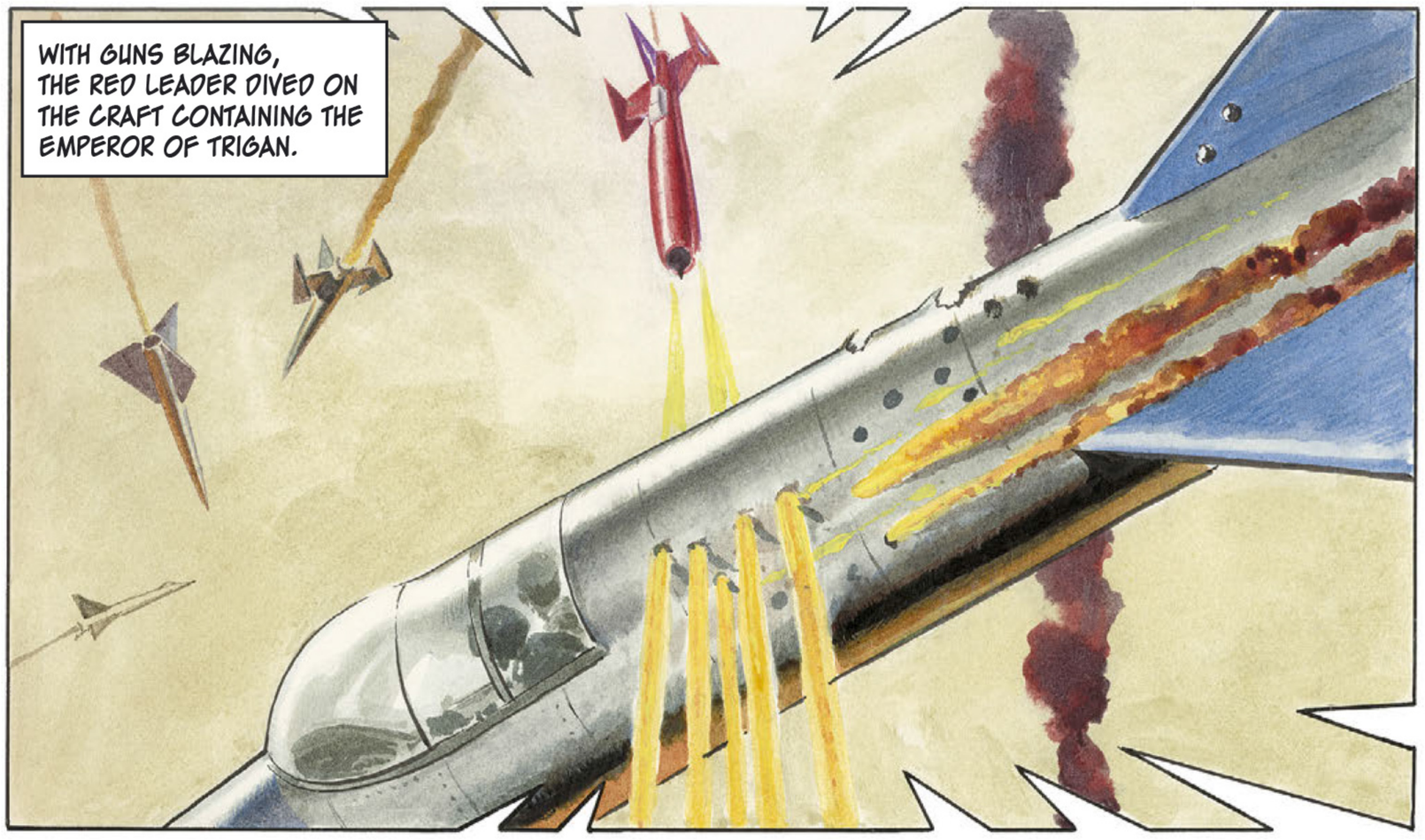
THEN, FATHER AND SON WERE THROWN INTO THE DEEP DUNGEON BENEATH THE PALACE.
YOU TWO WILL BE VERY COMFORTABLE HERE! HEH!


ALONE WITH HIS FATHER FOR THE FIRST TIME, JANNO EYED HIM QUESTIONINGLY.
YOU MUST BE ASHAMED OF ME. AFTER TRIGO HUMILIATED ME, I FOUND IT EASY, AT FIRST, TO AGREE TO DARAK'S PLAN. WHEN I CAME TO MY SENSES IT WAS TOO LATE!
UNCLE TRIGO REGRETTED THE THINGS HE HAD SAID TO YOU. HE TOLD ME THAT, APART FROM BEING HIS BROTHER, YOU WERE HIS DEAREST AND MOST FAITHFUL FRIEND!

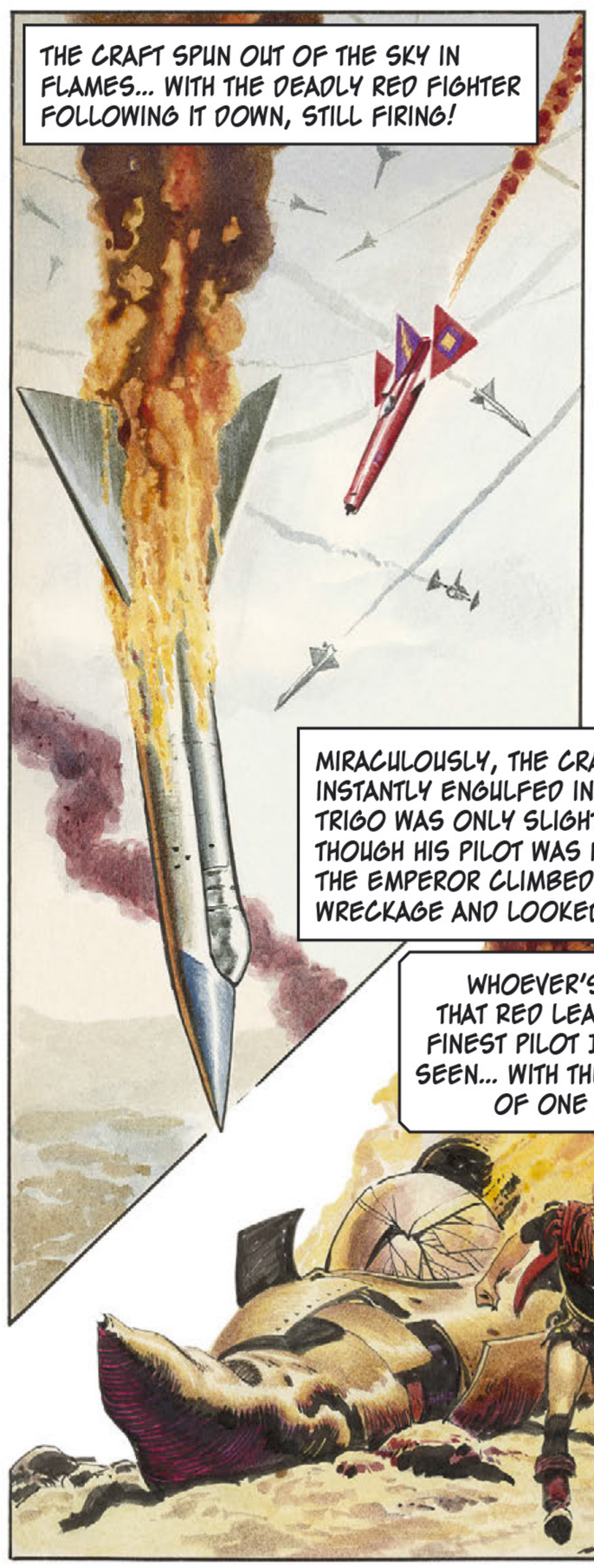
BRAG BEAT UPON THE DOOR OF THE DUNGEON IN HIS AGONY OF MIND.
TRIGO! TRIGO! YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO FORGIVE ME WHAT I HAVE DONE!

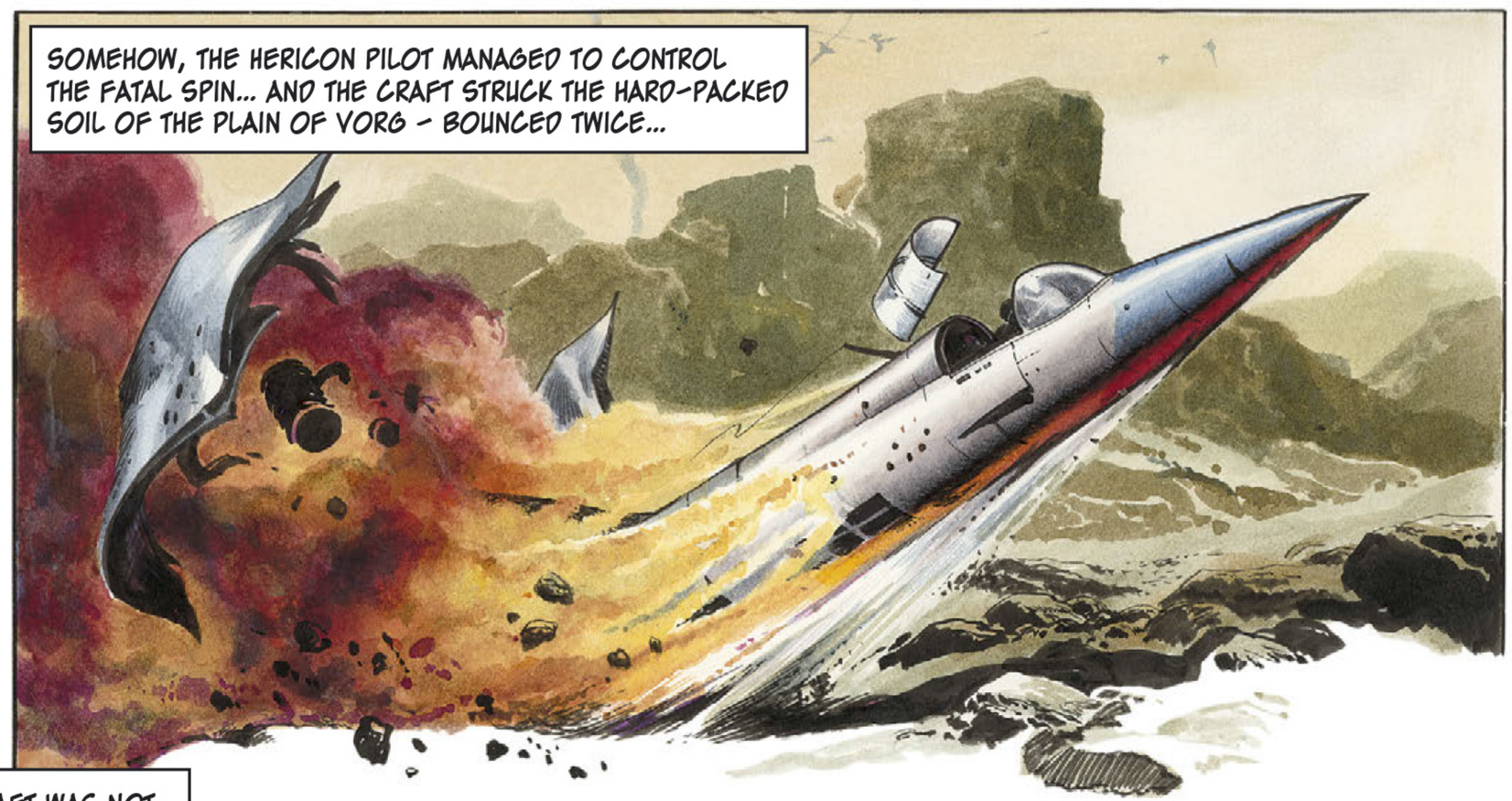

MEANWHILE, THE EVIL DARAK WAS SAVOURING HIS TRIUMPH.
NOW THAT I HAVE CONTROL OF THE LAND, SEA AND AIR FORMATIONS, I CAN DEAL WITH ANY COUNTER ATTACK... AND IT IS MY GUESS THAT KING KASSAR OF HERICON WILL TRY TO WIN BACK TRIGO'S EMPIRE FOR HIM...

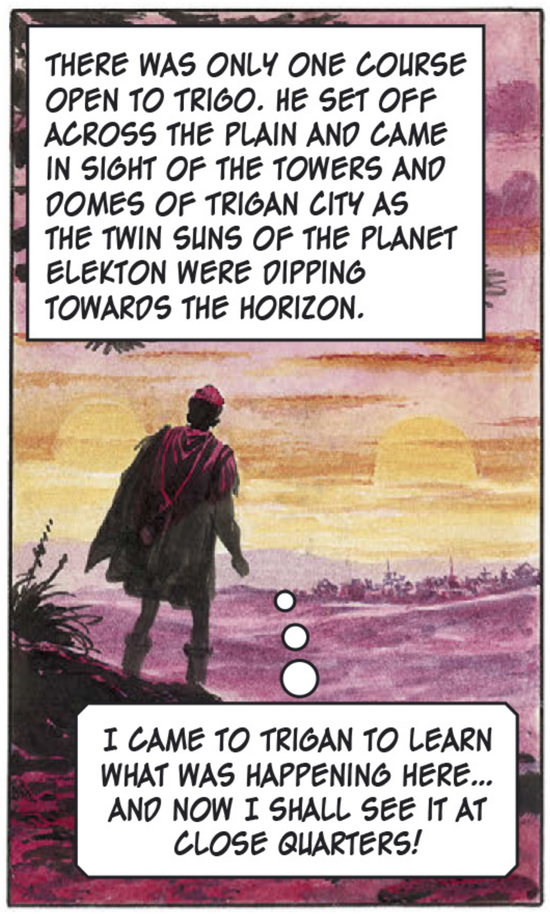

WELL! I AM READY FOR THEM... WITH FIRE AND FURY!
AT DAWN NEXT DAY, A FORMATION OF HERICON SCOUTING CRAFT CROSSED THE BORDERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AND HEADED FOR THE CITY.
FLYING IN THE LEADING CRAFT WAS TRIGO HIMSELF... AND HE REPEATED AN ORDER TO THE PILOTS OF THE FORMATION.
AND THEN... THEY CAME! OUT OF THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON, SIX FIGHTING CRAFT... ONE OF THEM PAINTED BLOOD RED!
DON'T FORGET... WE ARE ONLY HERE TO SCOUT AND OBSERVE. DO NOT ATTACK UNLESS YOU ARE ATTACKED FIRST... I WILL NOT HAVE THE BLOOD OF TRIGANS ON MY HANDS!
THE HERICON FORMATION NEVER HAD A CHANCE. IN THE FIRST PLUMMETING DIVE, THE ATTACKERS ACCOUNTED FOR ONE VICTIM EACH... AND THE SINISTER RED CRAFT DESTROYED TWO IN FLAMES!
AND THE PILOT OF THE RED CRAFT WAS... DARAK!
NOT FOR NOTHING WAS I ONCE THE COMMANDER OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET.


WITH GUNS BLAZING, THE RED LEADER DIVED ON THE CRAFT CONTAINING THE EMPEROR OF TRIGAN.

TRIGO FELT THE CRAFT SUFFER ITS DEATH BLOW AND THE NARROW COCKPIT WAS FILLED WITH ACRID SMOKE.
WE ARE DONE FOR!


THE CRAFT SPUN OUT OF THE SKY IN FLAMES... WITH THE DEADLY RED FIGHTER FOLLOWING IT DOWN, STILL FIRING!
MIRACULOUSLY, THE CRAFT WAS NOT INSTANTLY ENGULFED IN FLAMES AND TRIGO WAS ONLY SLIGHTLY HURT, THOUGH HIS PILOT WAS PAST ALL AID. THE EMPEROR CLIMBED OUT OF THE WRECKAGE AND LOOKED SKYWARDS...
WHOEVER'S FLYING THAT RED LEADER IS THE FINEST PILOT I HAVE EVER SEEN... WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ONE MAN...


SOMEHOW, THE HERICON PILOT MANAGED TO CONTROL THE FATAL SPIN... AND THE CRAFT STRUCK THE HARD-PACKED SOIL OF THE PLAIN OF VORG - BOUNCED TWICE...

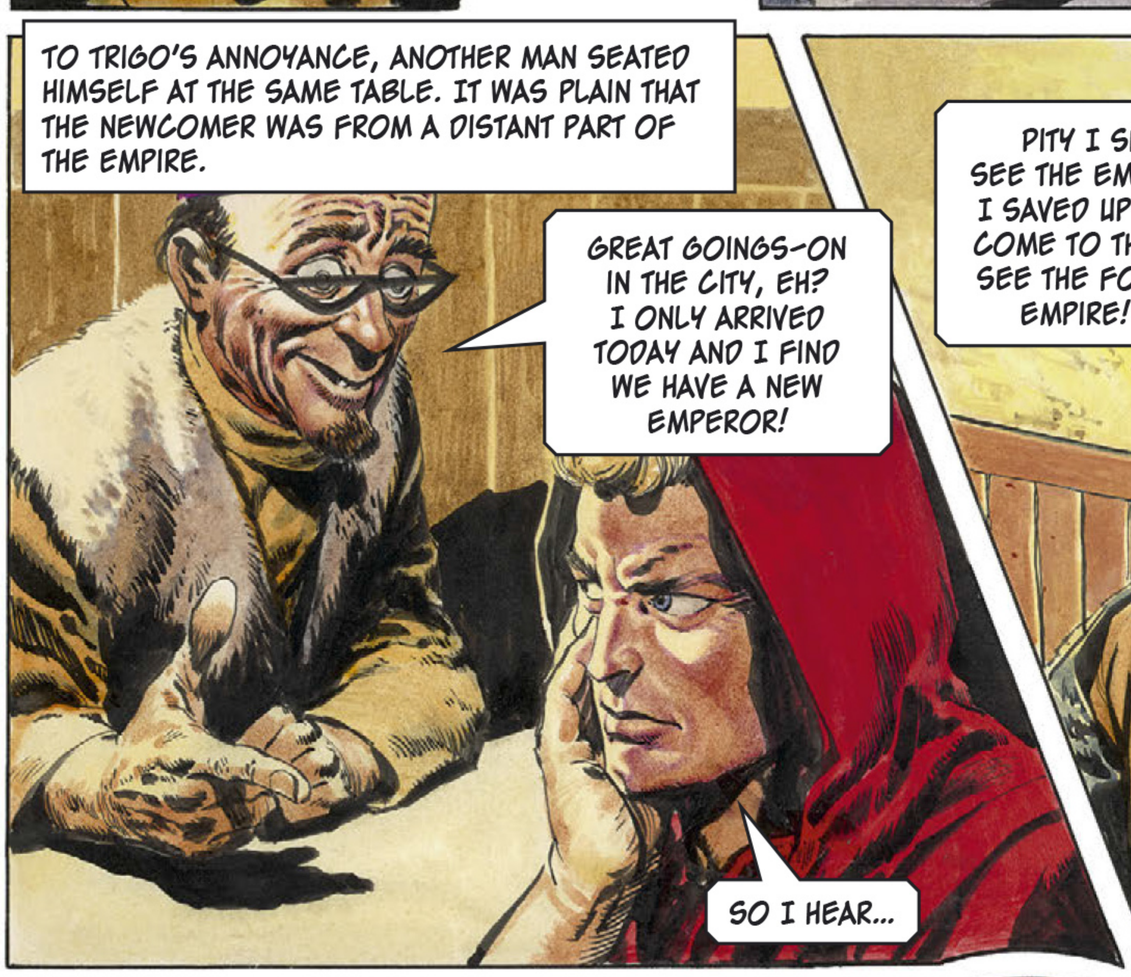

THERE WAS ONLY ONE COURSE OPEN TO TRIGO. HE SET OFF ACROSS THE PLAIN AND CAME IN SIGHT OF THE TOWERS AND DOMES OF TRIGAN CITY AS THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WERE DIPPING TOWARDS THE HORIZON.
I CAME TO TRIGAN TO LEARN WHAT WAS HAPPENING HERE... AND NOW I SHALL SEE IT AT CLOSE QUARTERS!

SHROUDING HIMSELF IN HIS HOODED CLOAK, THE EMPEROR STALKED UNRECOGNISED IN THE STREETS OF HIS OWN CITY. AND IN THE GREAT SQUARE HE HEARD THE HARSH CRY OF A REBEL OFFICER.
GATHER ROUND, YOU PEOPLE... I AM ABOUT TO READ A PROCLAMATION FROM HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THE EMPEROR BRAG!
THIS SHOULD BE INTERESTING...

"TODAY, A SMALL FORCE OF MY FIGHTERS ATTACKED A LARGE FORMATION OF HOSTILE HERICON SCOUTING CRAFT OVER THE PLAIN OF VORG AND DESTROYED THEM COMPLETELY. THIS SHATTERING VICTORY WAS OBTAINED THROUGH THE BRILLIANT LEADERSHIP OF DARAK, THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF MY IMPERIAL FORCES, WHO HIMSELF LED THE ATTACK..."

BY ALL THE STARS! NOT ONLY HAS MY TREACHEROUS BROTHER STOLEN MY EMPIRE BUT HE HAS MADE THAT SCOUNDREL DARAK THE SUPREME COMMANDER... AND, OF COURSE, IT WAS DARAK IN THE RED FIGHTER... WHO ELSE COULD FLY LIKE THAT?

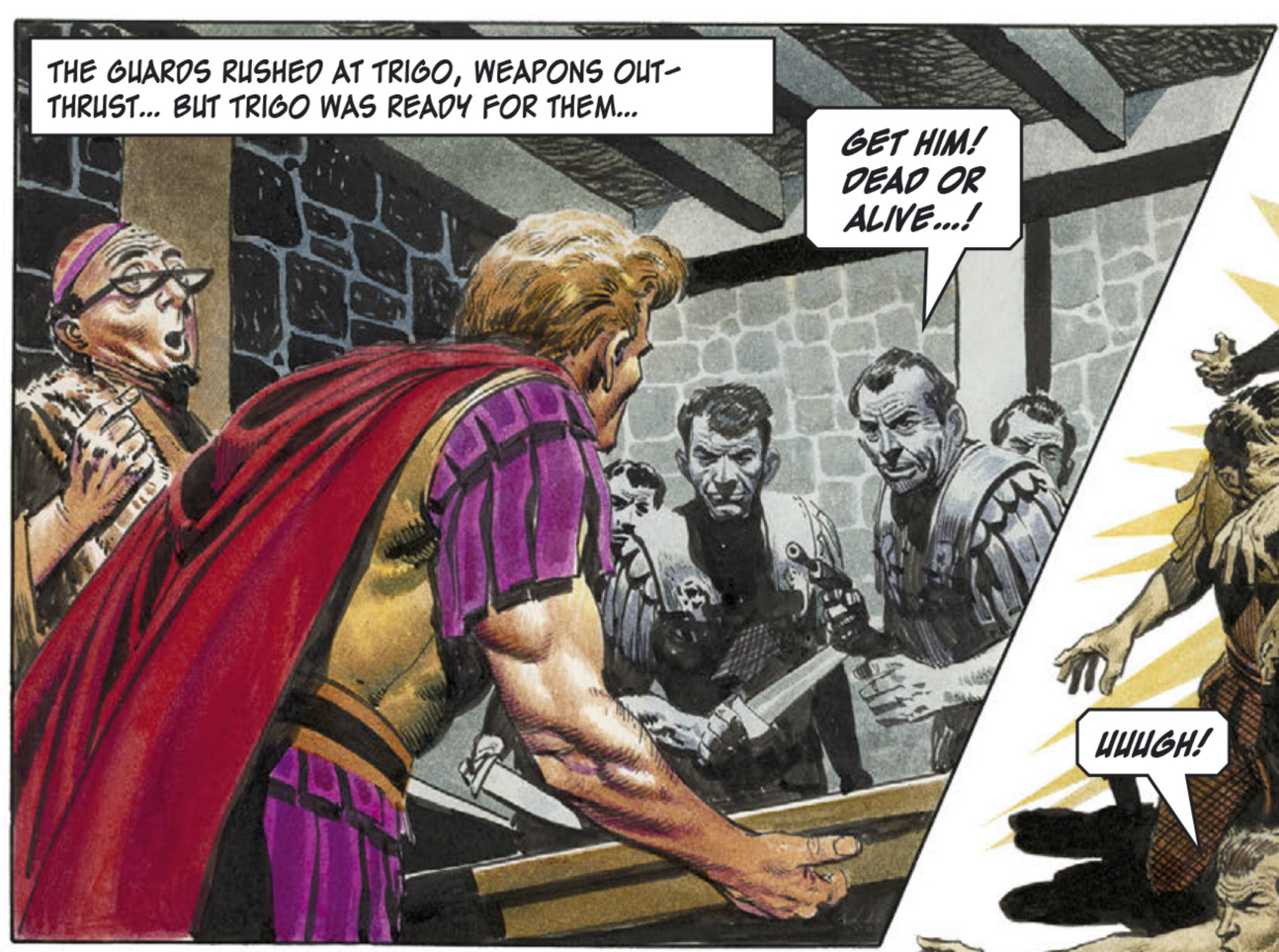
LATER, SEEKING FOOD AND SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT, TRIGO WENT TO A SMALL TRAVELLERS' INN IN THE POOR PART OF THE CITY.
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EAT, MASTER?
BRING ME ANYTHING YOU HAVE.


TO TRIGO'S ANNOYANCE, ANOTHER MAN SEATED HIMSELF AT THE SAME TABLE. IT WAS PLAIN THAT THE NEWCOMER WAS FROM A DISTANT PART OF THE EMPIRE.
GREAT GOINGS-ON IN THE CITY, EH? I ONLY ARRIVED TODAY AND I FIND WE HAVE A NEW EMPEROR!
SO I HEAR...

THEN THE DOOR BURST OPEN AND A GROUP OF REBEL GUARDS SWAGGERED IN!
PITY I SHALL NEVER SEE THE EMPEROR TRIGO... I SAVED UP MY MONEY TO COME TO THE CAPITAL AND SEE THE FOUNDER OF THE EMPIRE! AH, WELL...
BY THE STARS... IF THEY KNEW I WAS HERE...

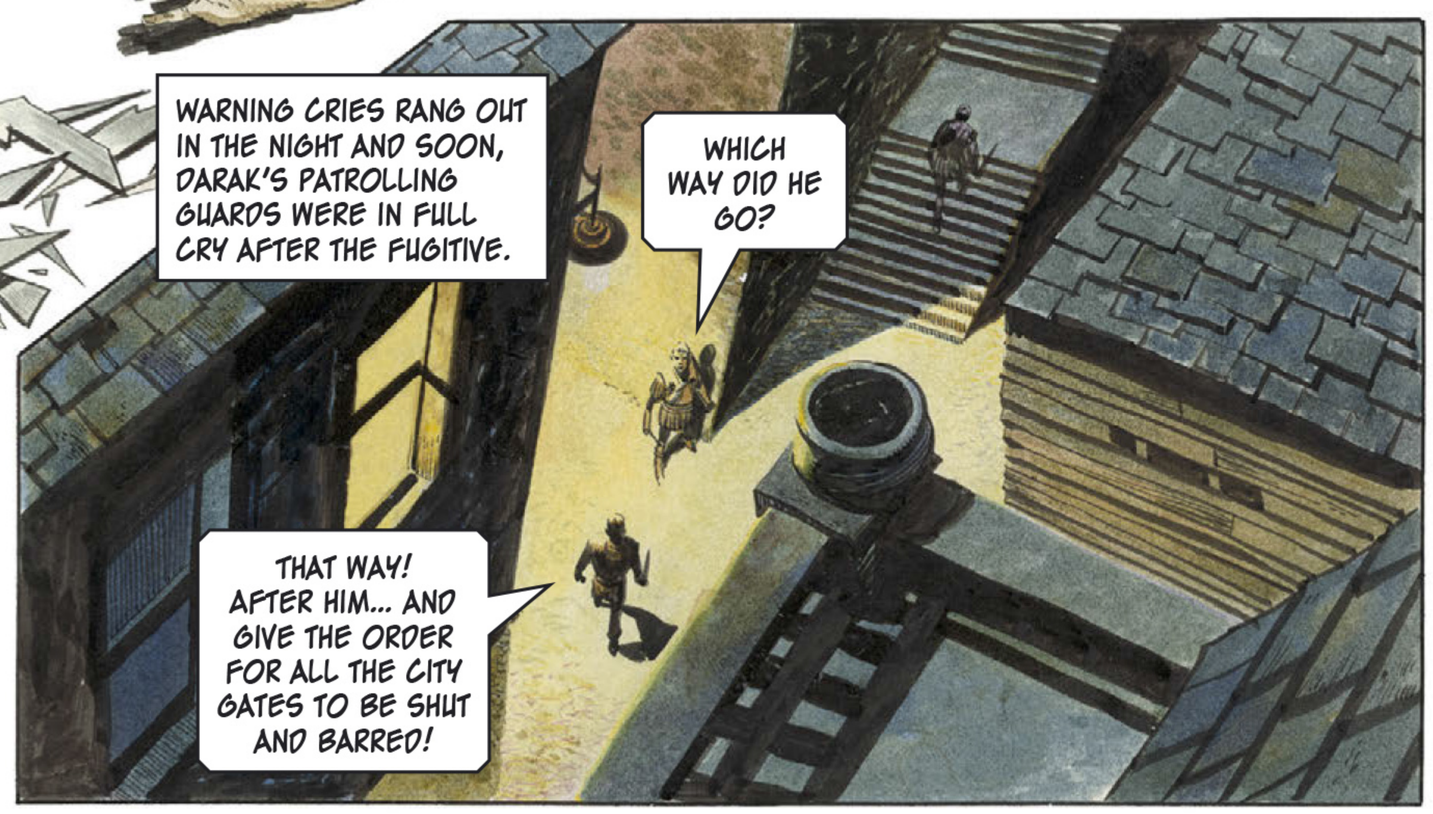
AND THEN... A CRUEL STROKE OF FATE!
BY ALL THE STARS, YOU ARE THE EMPEROR... JUST AS THIS IS YOU ON THE COIN!

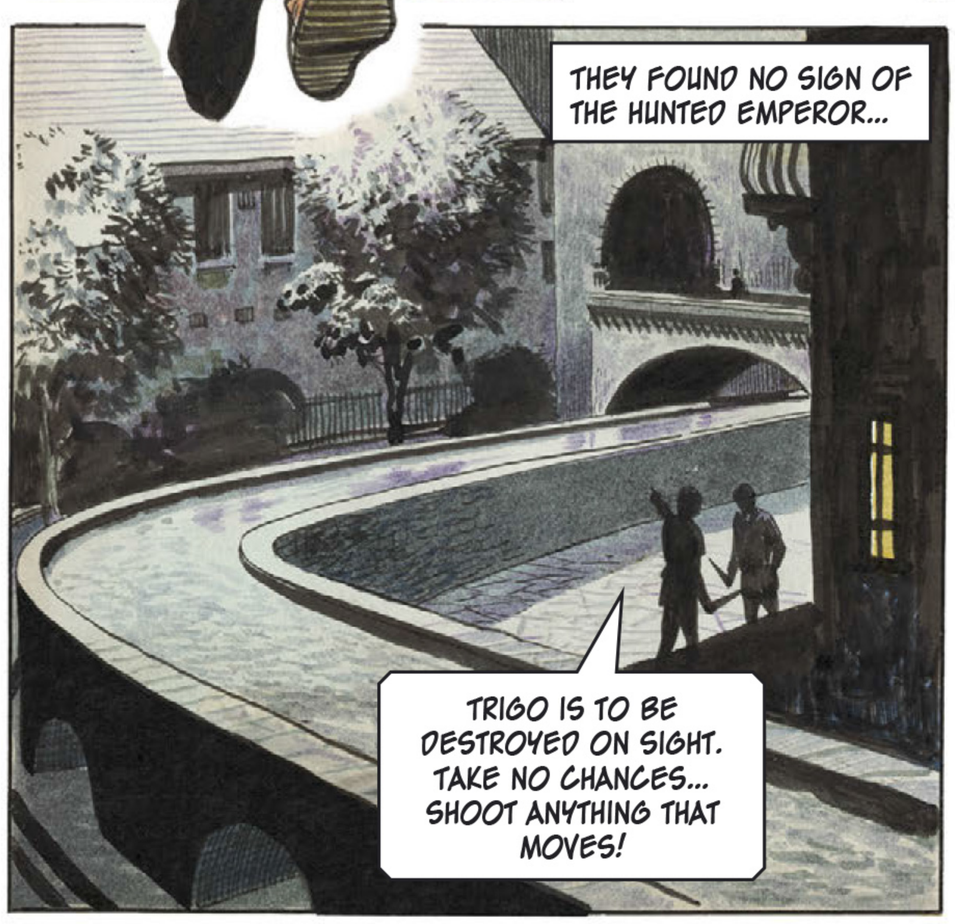
TRIGO LEAPT TO HIS FEET... BUT THE GUARDS HAD HEARD AND WERE ALREADY DRAWING THEIR WEAPONS!
WHAT'S THAT? TRIGO... HERE?
YES! THERE HE IS... AT HIM!

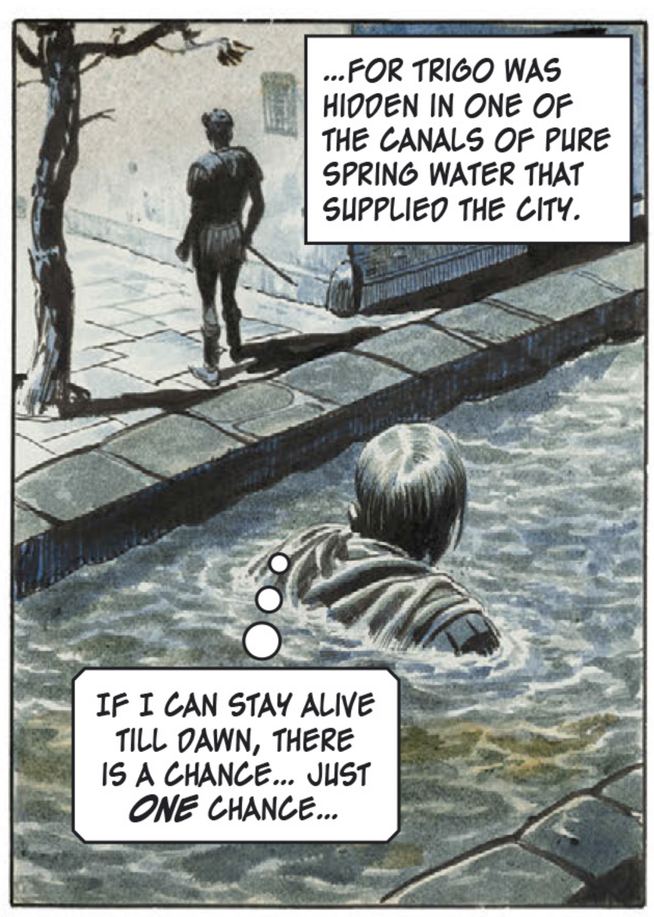

THE GUARDS RUSHED AT TRIGO, WEAPONS OUT-THRUST... BUT TRIGO WAS READY FOR THEM...
GET HIM! DEAD OR ALIVE...!

SEIZING THE EDGE OF THE HEAVY TABLE, HE FLUNG IT FULL IN THEIR FACES!
AAAAAGH!
NOT SO FAST, TRAITORS! MANY SHALL FALL BEFORE I DO!
UUUGH!

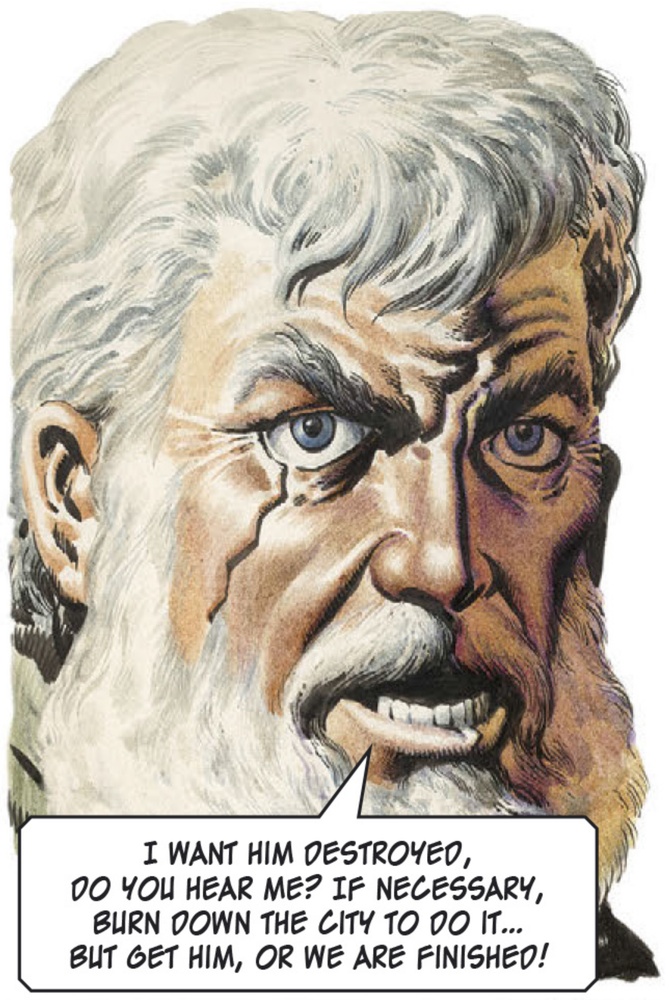
THEN HE LEAPT ACROSS THE ROOM AND BURST OUT OF THE WINDOW!

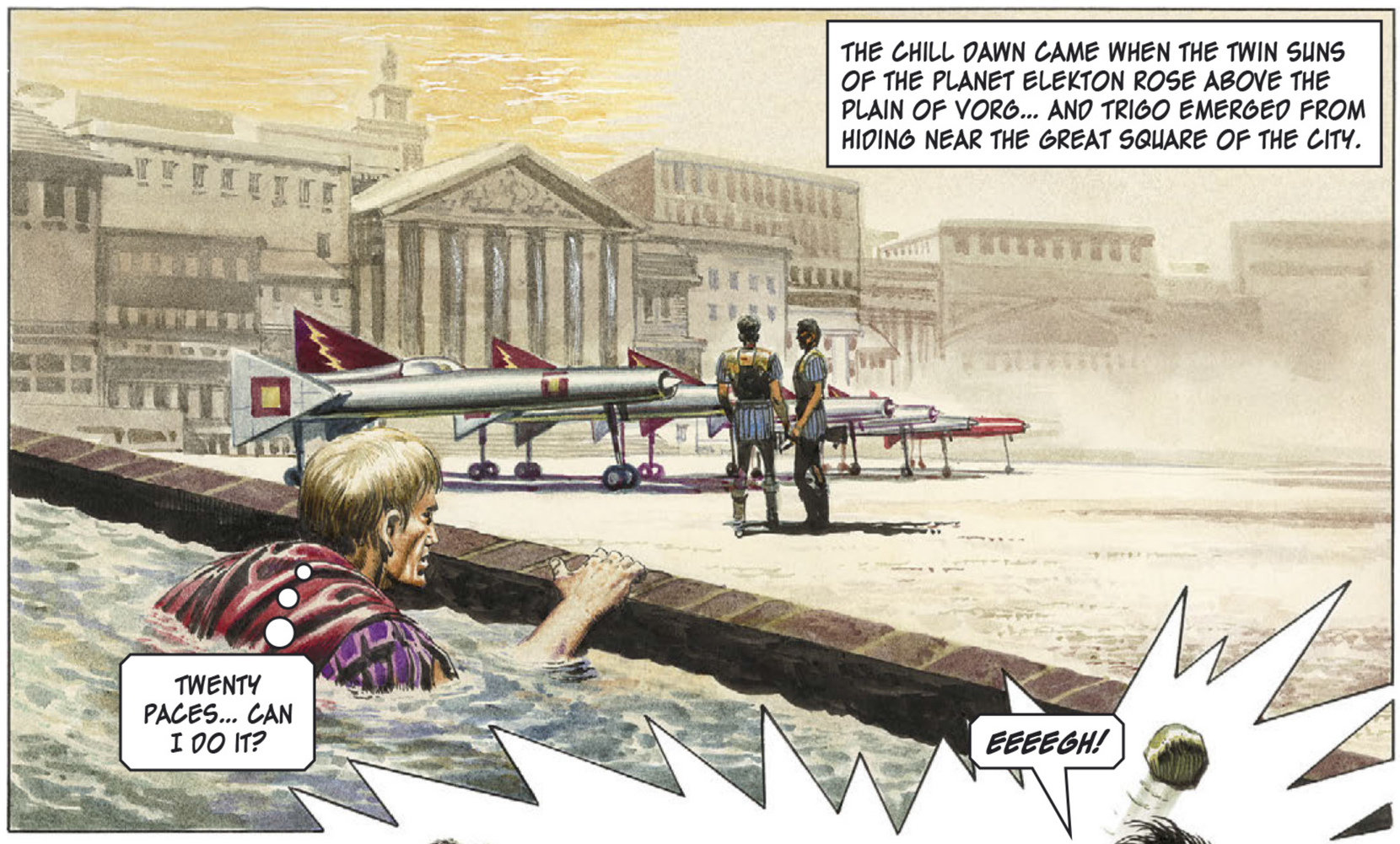

WARNING CRIES RANG OUT IN THE NIGHT AND SOON, DARAK'S PATROLLING GUARDS WERE IN FULL CRY AFTER THE FUGITIVE.
WHICH WAY DID HE GO?
THAT WAY! AFTER HIM... AND GIVE THE ORDER FOR ALL THE CITY GATES TO BE SHUT AND BARRED!


THEY FOUND NO SIGN OF THE HUNTED EMPEROR...
TRIGO IS TO BE DESTROYED ON SIGHT. TAKE NO CHANCES... SHOOT ANYTHING THAT MOVES!


...FOR TRIGO WAS HIDDEN IN ONE OF THE CANALS OF PURE SPRING WATER THAT SUPPLIED THE CITY.
IF I CAN STAY ALIVE TILL DAWN, THERE IS A CHANCE... JUST ONE CHANCE...

THE NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO DARAK IN THE IMPERIAL PALACE.
TRIGO ALIVE? HERE... IN THE CITY? FOOLS! GET AFTER HIM... WHY DO YOU STAND SNIVELLING HERE?

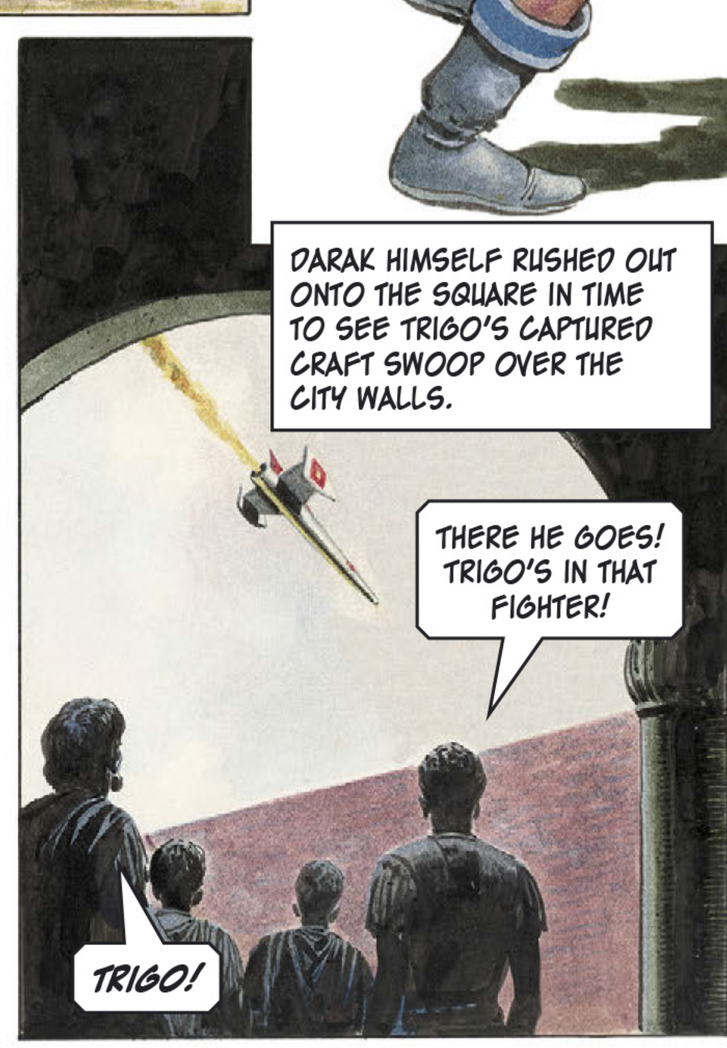

I WANT HIM DESTROYED, DO YOU HEAR ME? IF NECESSARY, BURN DOWN THE CITY TO DO IT... BUT GET HIM, OR WE ARE FINISHED!

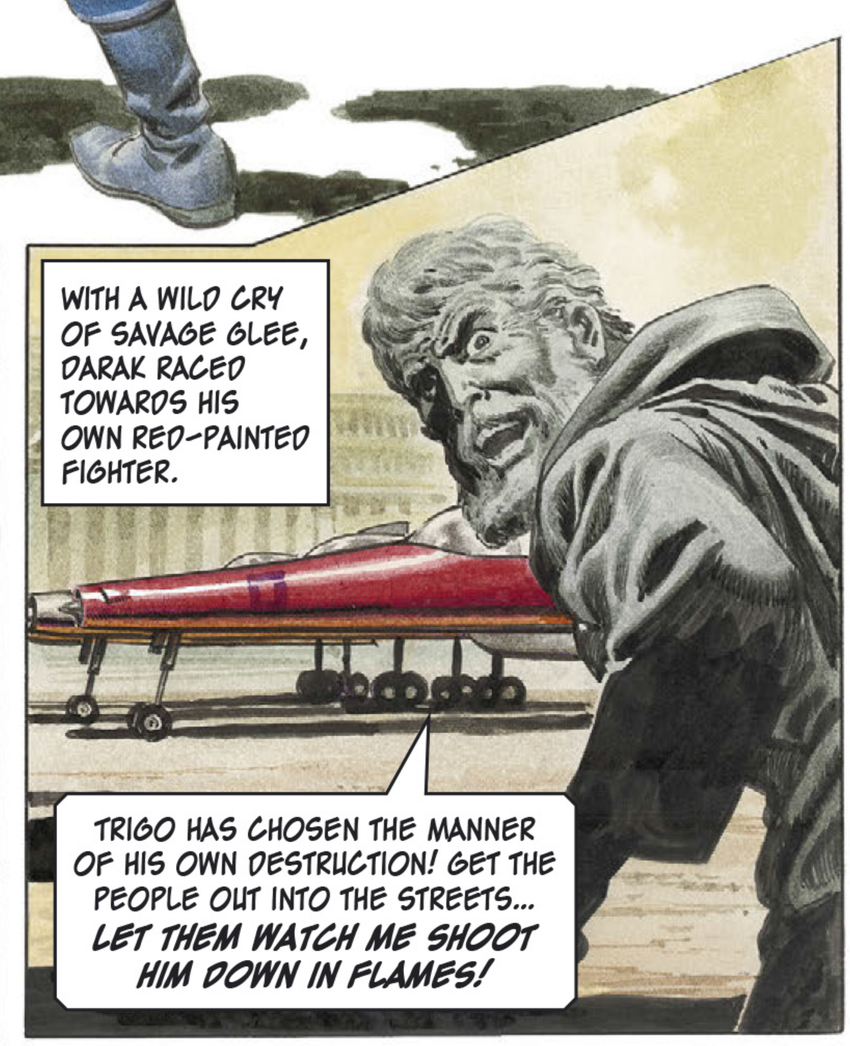

THE CHILL DAWN CAME WHEN THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON ROSE ABOVE THE PLAIN OF VORG... AND TRIGO EMERGED FROM HIDING NEAR THE GREAT SQUARE OF THE CITY.
TWENTY PACES... CAN I DO IT?

TWO GUARDS OF THE TRIGAN FIGHTER CRAFT HEARD THE SUDDEN POUNDING OF RUNNING FEET AND TURNED...
TRIGO!

EEEEGH!

SPLIT SECONDS LATER, TRIGO WRENCHED OPEN THE COCKPIT OF THE NEAREST FIGHTER CRAFT AND THREW HIMSELF INSIDE!
ALARM! ALARM! TRIGO IS HERE!


DARAK HIMSELF RUSHED OUT ONTO THE SQUARE IN TIME TO SEE TRIGO'S CAPTURED CRAFT SWOOP OVER THE CITY WALLS.
THERE HE GOES! TRIGO'S IN THAT FIGHTER!
TRIGO!


WITH A WILD CRY OF SAVAGE GLEE, DARAK RACED TOWARDS HIS OWN RED-PAINTED FIGHTER.
TRIGO HAS CHOSEN THE MANNER OF HIS OWN DESTRUCTION! GET THE PEOPLE OUT INTO THE STREETS... LET THEM WATCH ME SHOOT HIM DOWN IN FLAMES!

WATCHERS FROM THE CITY SAW TRIGO'S CRAFT SET OFF OVER THE PLAIN OF VORG WITH THE DEADLY RED KILLER CLOSE BEHIND.

WITH A SUDDEN SHOCK OF FEAR – WHICH HE INSTANTLY QUENCHED – TRIGO SAW THE SCARLET SPOT IN HIS REAR-VIEW MIRROR AND KNEW THAT THE GREATEST AIR FIGHTER ON THE PLANET ELEKTON WAS ON HIS TAIL!

THERE'S NO ESCAPE... I SHALL HAVE TO FIGHT HIM!

DARAK BARED HIS TEETH IN A GRIN AND SQUINTED THROUGH HIS GUN SIGHT...

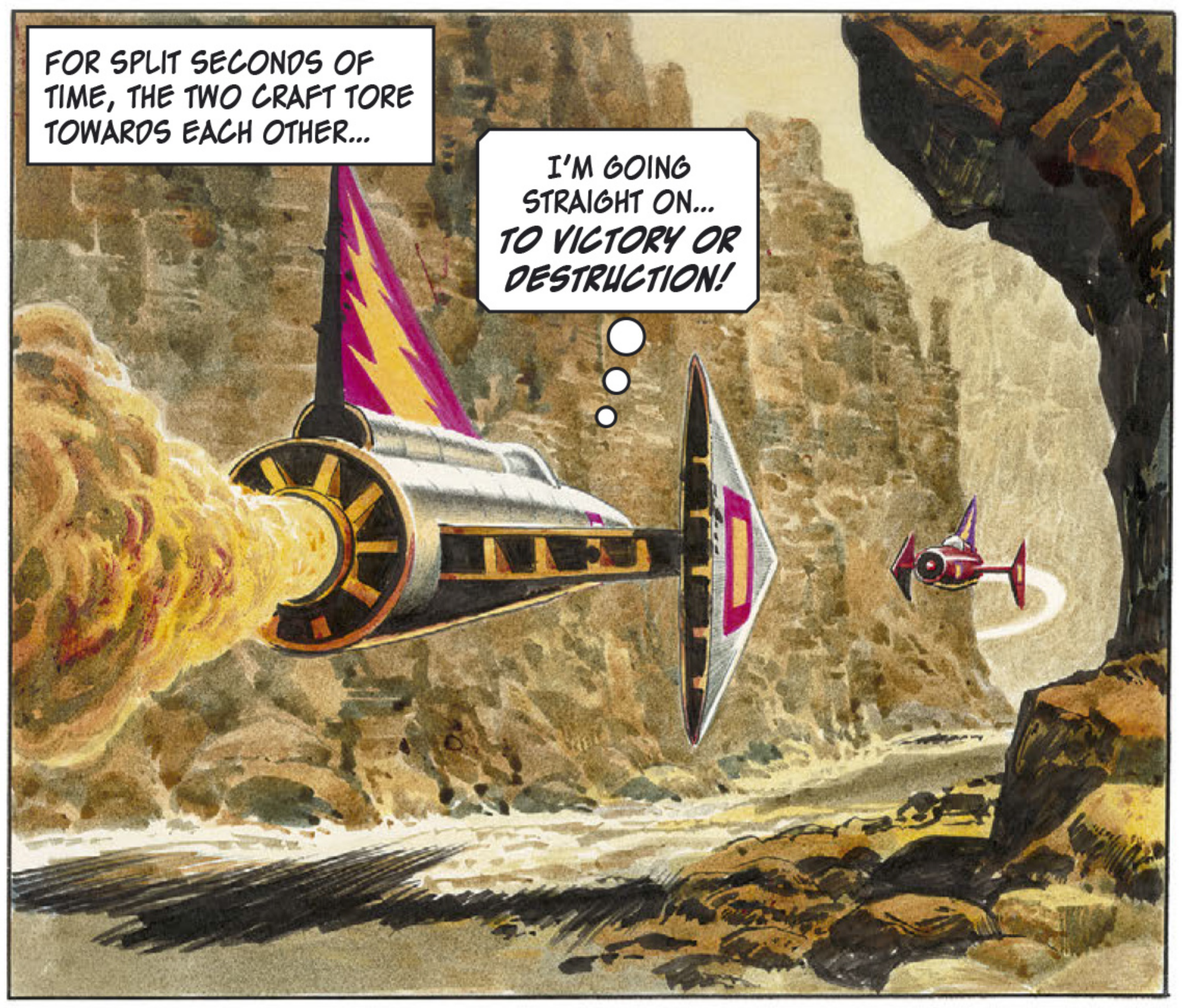
YOU WILL NOT GO EASILY, MIGHTY EMPEROR... OH, NO! FIRST I WILL SHOOT YOUR CRAFT TO PIECES AND TEACH YOU THE MEANING OF FEAR!

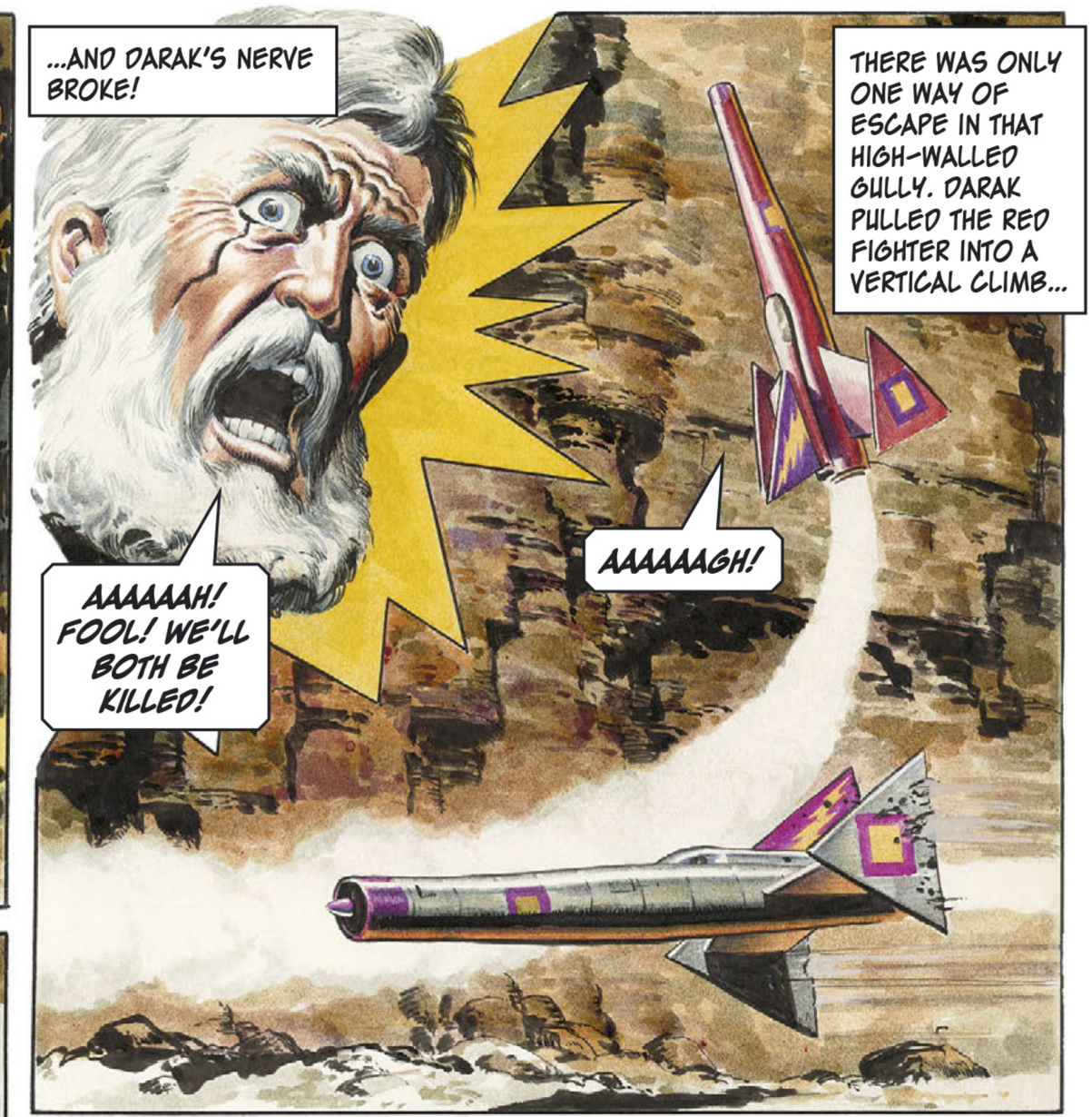
TRIGO DIVED LOW, SEEKING THE PROTECTION OF THE ROCKY CRAGS OF VORG... AS, WITH BREATHTAKING ACCURACY, DARAK'S SHELLS SLICED AT THE TIPS OF HIS CRAFT.

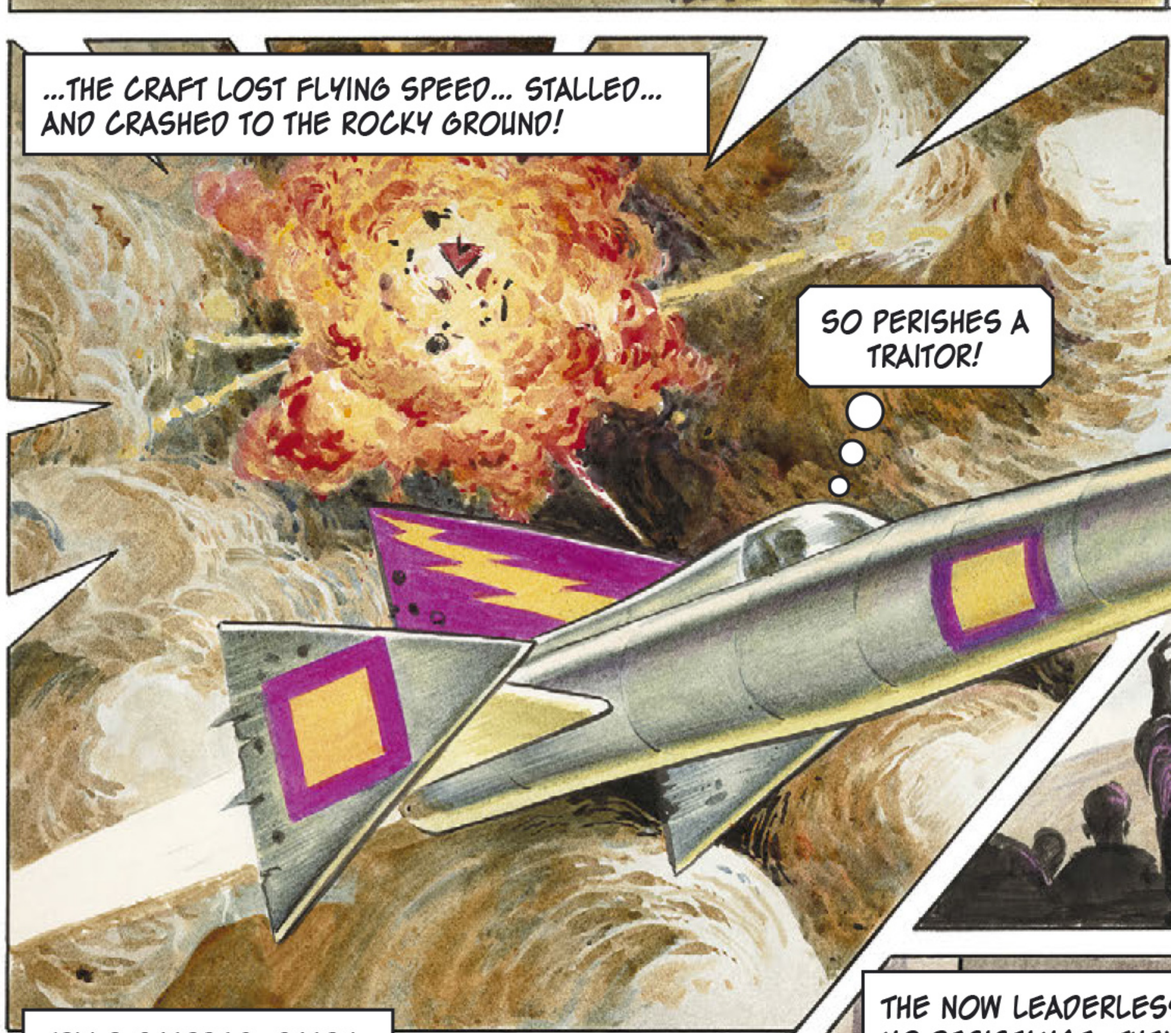
FACED WITH A SUPERIOR OPPONENT IN FLYING ABILITY AND MARKSMANSHIP, TRIGO KNEW THAT ONLY ONE THING COULD SAVE HIM... HIS DAUNTLESS COURAGE!

ONE CHANCE... ONE DESPERATE CHANCE...

PUTTING HIS CRAFT INTO A TIGHT TURN, TRIGO HEADED STRAIGHT FOR HIS ONCOMING ADVERSARY...


FOR SPLIT SECONDS OF TIME, THE TWO CRAFT TORE TOWARDS EACH OTHER...
I'M GOING STRAIGHT ON... TO VICTORY OR DESTRUCTION!


...AND DARAK'S NERVE BROKE!
THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY OF ESCAPE IN THAT HIGH-WALLED GULLY. DARAK PULLED THE RED FIGHTER INTO A VERTICAL CLIMB...
AAAAAAH! FOOL! WE'LL BOTH BE KILLED!
AAAAAAGH!


...THE CRAFT LOST FLYING SPEED... STALLED... AND CRASHED TO THE ROCKY GROUND!
SO PERISHES A TRAITOR!

THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN CITY HAD STOOD IN SILENCE ALL THIS TIME, AWAITING THE RETURN OF THE VICTOR. A GREAT CRY WENT UP WHEN THEY SAW IT WAS NOT THE RED CRAFT... BUT THEIR EMPEROR'S.
LONG LIVE TRIGO!
DOWN WITH BRAG!

TRIGO STEPPED, STERN-FACED, TO THE GROUND.
THE REBELS HAVE SHUT THEMSELVES IN THE PALACE, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
DRAG THEM OUT INTO THE SQUARE... AND MY TREACHEROUS BROTHER WITH THEM!

THE NOW LEADERLESS REBELS OFFERED NO RESISTANCE. THEY WERE DRIVEN OUT INTO THE SUNLIGHT OF THE GREAT SQUARE... AND WITH THEM WERE BRAG AND JANNO.
LOOK YOUR LAST UPON THE SKY, BRAG... YOUR TIME HAS RUN OUT!
YOU'RE GOING TO FACE THE SHARP EDGE OF TRIGAN JUSTICE!

THERE WAS TO BE NO MERCY... NOT EVEN FOR THE EMPEROR'S BROTHER AND NEPHEW!
IN ACCORDANCE WITH TRIGAN LAW YOU WILL CHOOSE YOUR OWN FATE – A LIFETIME OF SLAVERY IN THE MINES... OR A SWIFT SWORD-STROKE! CHOOSE!

THERE WAS SILENCE FOR SOME MOMENTS... THEN BRAG'S VOICE RANG OUT IN THE CROWDED CITY SQUARE.
BROTHER... BEFORE MY LIFE ENDS WITH A SWORD STROKE, I WISH TO SPEAK...
SPEAK, THEN... IF YOU MUST!
BRAG SPOKE WITH SIMPLE DIGNITY.
I DO NOT EXCUSE WHAT MY STUPIDITY LED ME TO DO, BUT I ASK FOR THE LIFE OF MY SON - YOUR NEPHEW - JANNO. HE IS INNOCENT OF TREASON AGAINST YOU, I PROMISE YOU!
AND TRIGO ANSWERED WITHOUT HESITATION.
I ACCEPT YOUR WORD... JANNO IS RELEASED. THE REST WILL SUFFER THE SWORD OR LIFE IMPRISONMENT AT THEIR OWN CHOICE!
THEN, ONE OF THE REBEL OFFICERS - MORE HATE-FILLED AND DESPERATE THAN THE REST - SNATCHED A LANCE FROM ONE OF THE LOYAL CITIZENS...
YOU SHALL PERISH WITH US, TRIGO!
TWO PACES SEPARATED BRAG FROM THE PATH OF THE HURTLING LANCE... AND HE WAS THERE TO RECEIVE IT INSTEAD OF TRIGO!
BRAG!
BROTHER... FORGIVE... ME...
WITH AN ANGUISHED CRY, THE EMPEROR RUSHED TO HIS SIDE.
BRAG! BRAG! SPEAK TO ME!
THEY CARRIED BRAG UP TO PERIC'S NEW LABORATORY, WHICH HAD BEEN BUILT ON A HILLTOP OVERLOOKING THE CITY.
CAN YOU SAVE HIM, PERIC?
I WILL USE ALL MY ARTS TO PRESERVE HIS LIFE!

PERIC, THE MOST BRILLIANT SCIENTIST ON THE PLANET ELEKTON, HAD DEVISED A METHOD OF HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE ELEMENTS IN THE CAUSE OF HEALING. THAT NIGHT, HE INDUCED A THUNDERSTORM BY MEANS OF MAGNETISM... AND THE LIGHTNING PLAYED DOWN UPON THE LABORATORY ON THE HILLCREST...

ALL THROUGH THAT STORM-RENT NIGHT, THE HEALING POWER WAS DIRECTED THROUGH THE LIMP FORM OF THE EMPEROR'S BROTHER.

WHEN THE TWIN SUNS ROSE IN THE SKY OF ELEKTON, THEY RECEIVED THE WONDERFUL NEWS...

HE WILL LIVE!

THANK THE STARS! IT WAS ALL MY FAULT... I SPURNED HIM BECAUSE HE IS SLOW AND PLODDING – FORGETTING THAT, AT HEART, HE IS MY BEST FRIEND!

MY FATHER NEVER REALLY REALISED WHAT HE HAD DONE TILL IT WAS TOO LATE, UNCLE... THEN HE WAS FULL OF REMORSE!

LATER, THE TWO BROTHERS CLASPED HANDS IN A NEW UNDERSTANDING... FORGED IN THE FIRE OF ADVERSITY.

BROTHERS... FRIENDS... COMRADES... TILL DEATH!

TILL DEATH, TRIGO... TILL DEATH!

XI

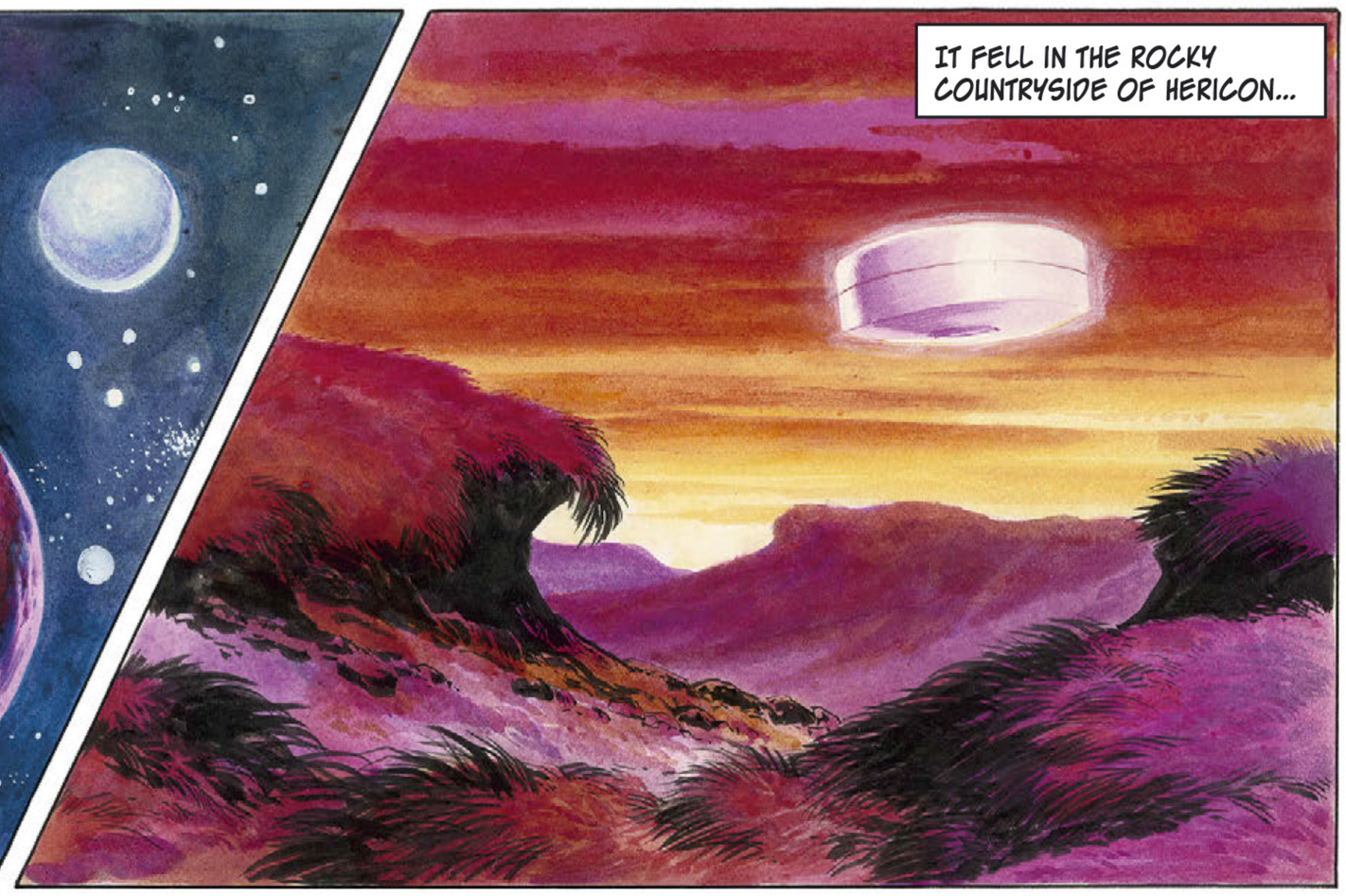
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE ALIEN INVASION

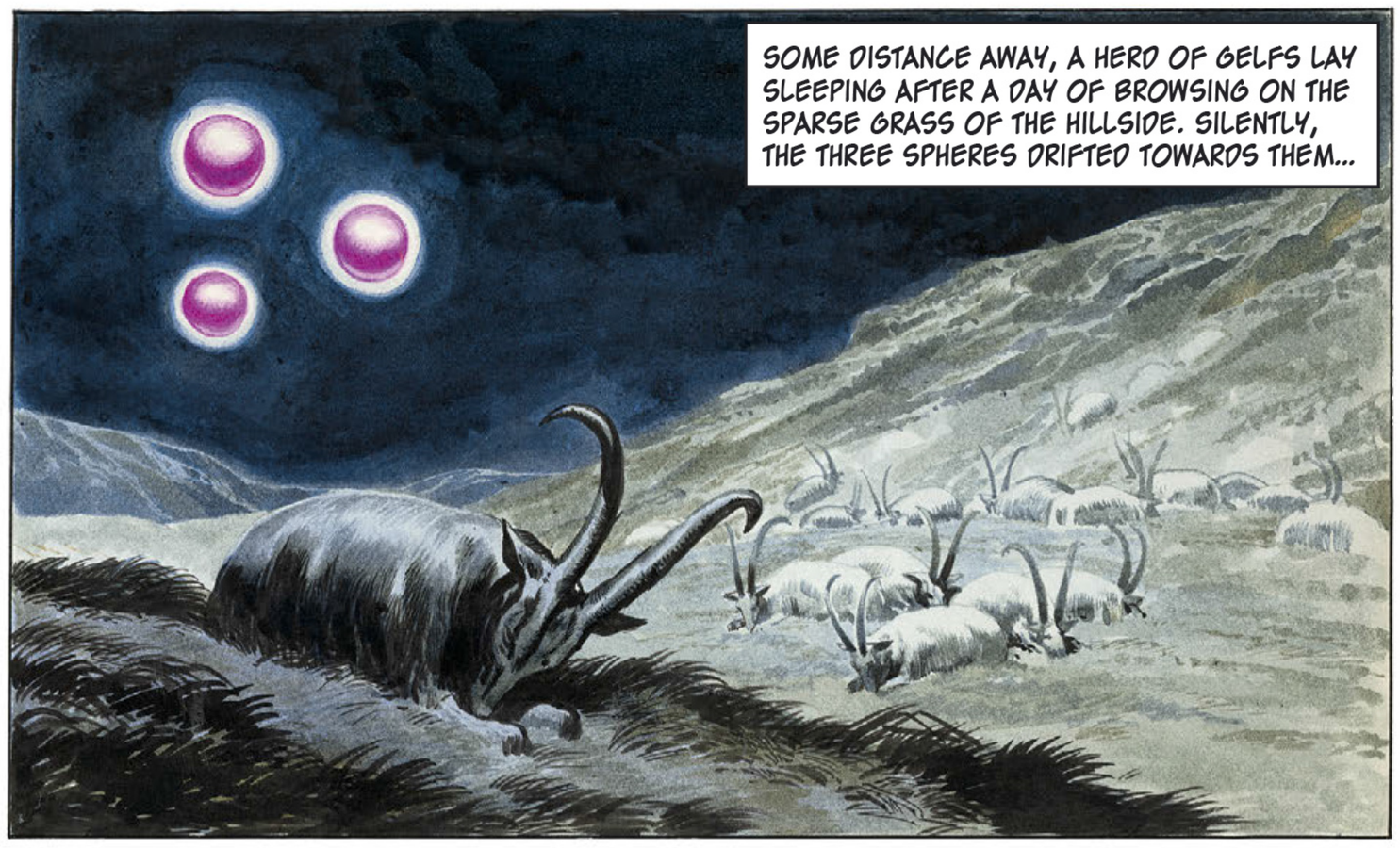
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 291 – 297

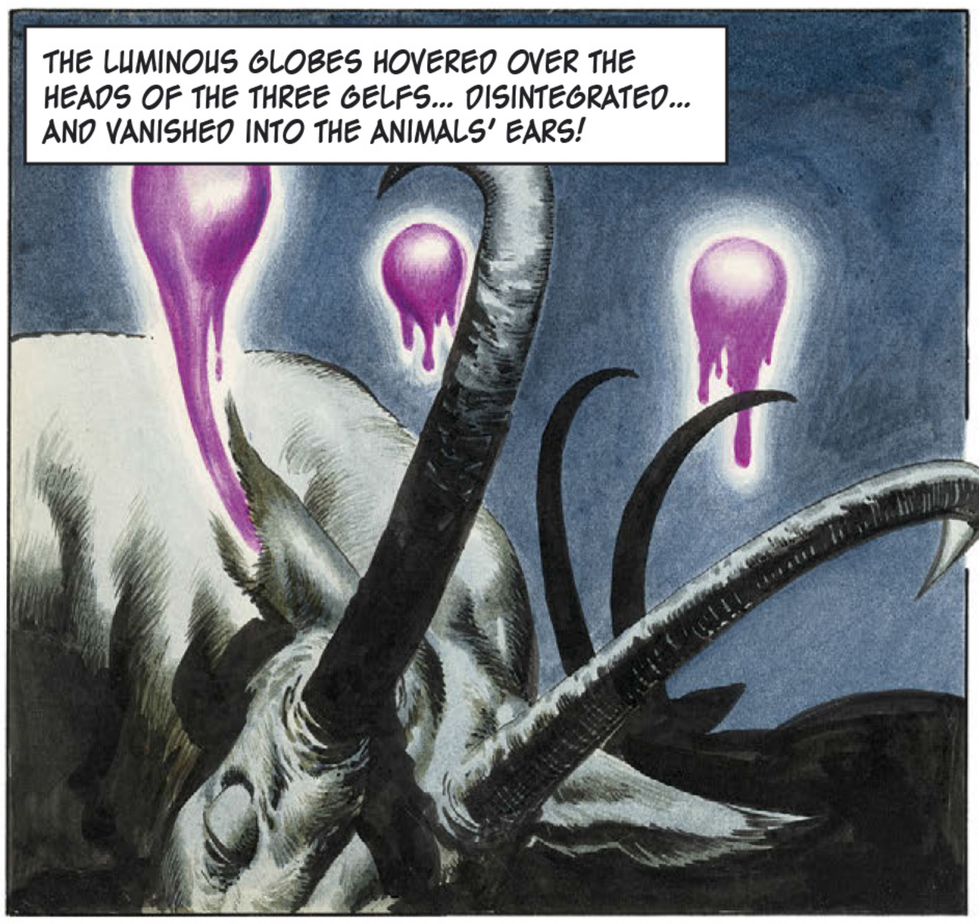
13th August – 23rd September 1967

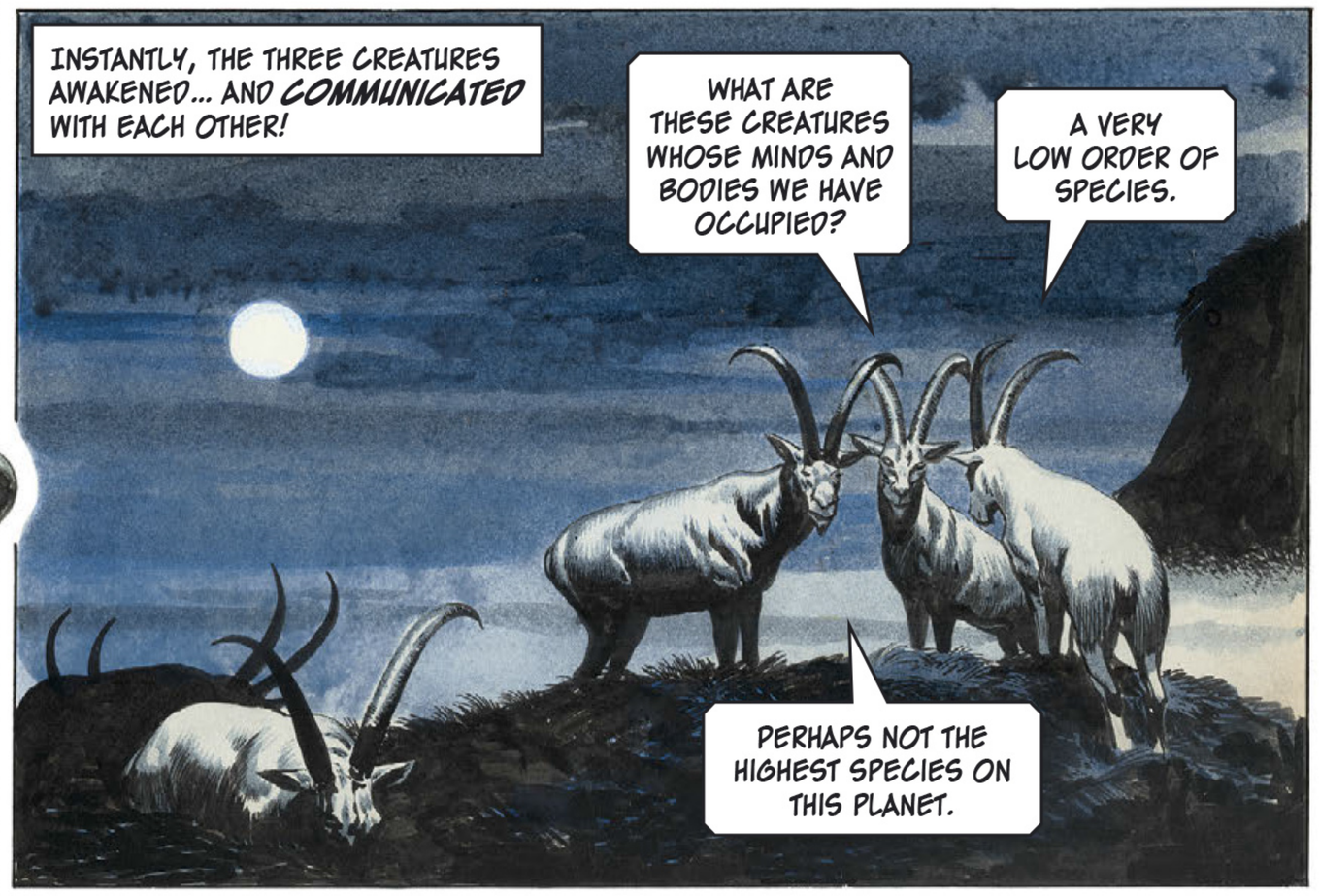
DRIVEN FAR FROM ITS OWN GALAXY BY A SPACE STORM, A STRANGE CRAFT WAS CAUGHT UP IN THE GRAVITY FIELD OF THE PLANET ELEKTON AND DRAWN TOWARDS IT...

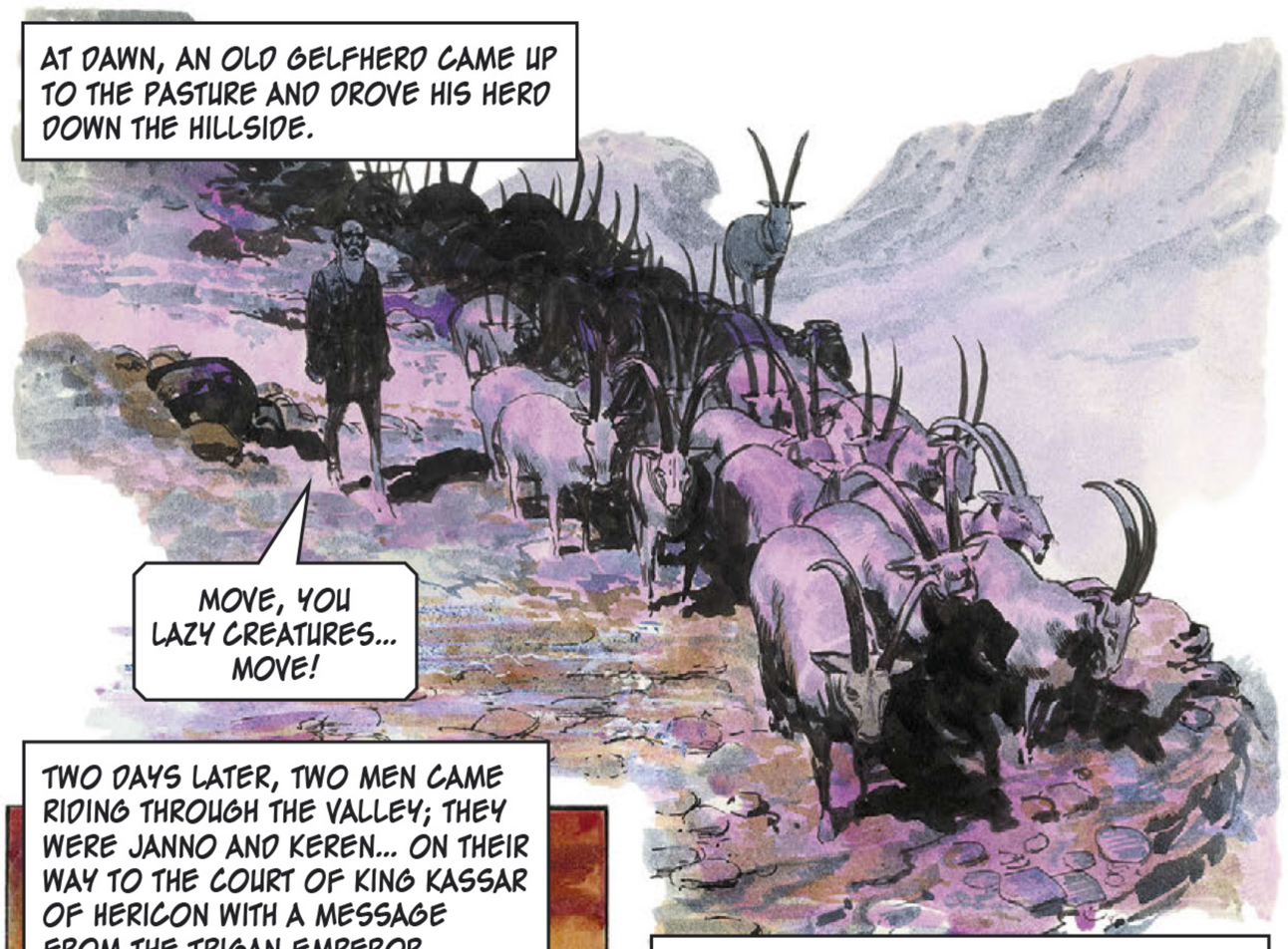

IT FELL IN THE ROCKY COUNTRYSIDE OF HERICON...

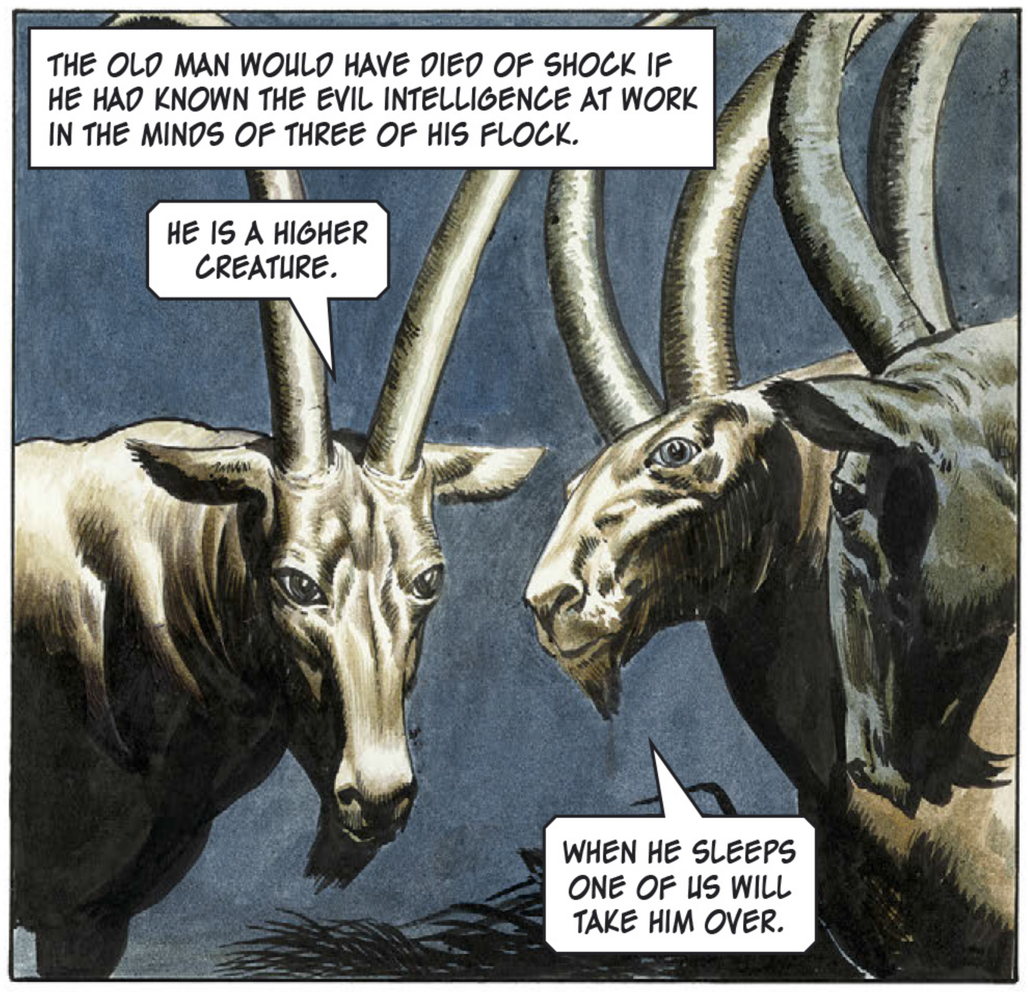
NIGHT FELL, AND IN THE GLOAMING THREE LUMINOUS SPHERES EMERGED FROM THE CRAFT AND HOVERED ABOVE IT...

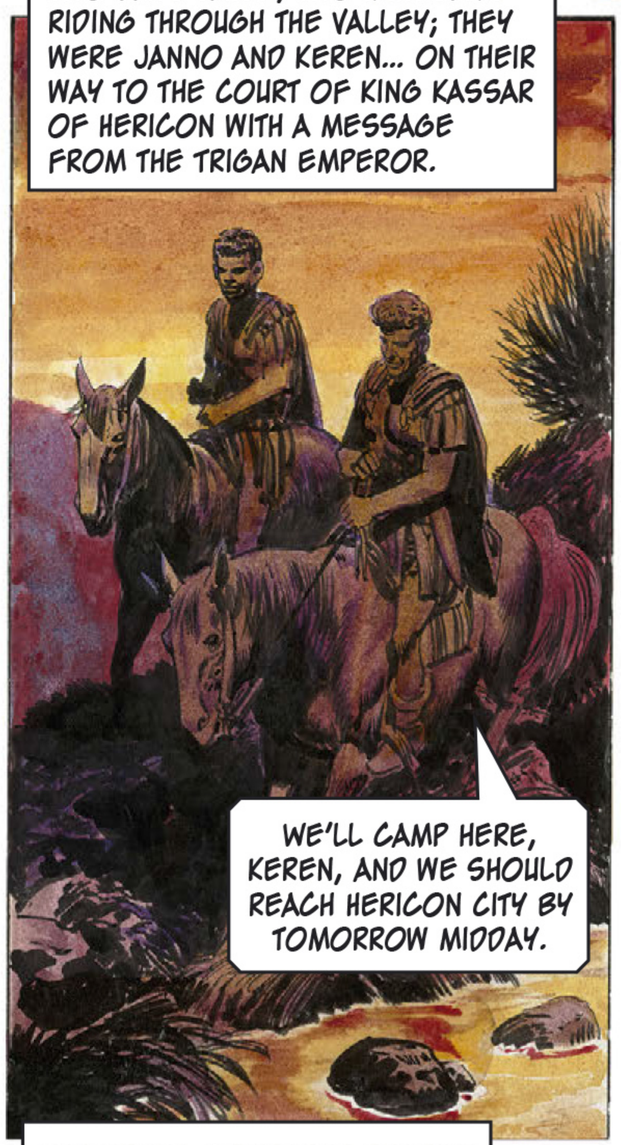

SOME DISTANCE AWAY, A HERD OF GELFS LAY SLEEPING AFTER A DAY OF BROWSING ON THE SPARSE GRASS OF THE HILLSIDE. SILENTLY, THE THREE SPHERES DRIFTED TOWARDS THEM...


THE LUMINOUS GLOBES HOVERED OVER THE HEADS OF THE THREE GELFS... DISINTEGRATED... AND VANISHED INTO THE ANIMALS' EARS!


INSTANTLY, THE THREE CREATURES AWAKENED... AND COMMUNICATED WITH EACH OTHER!
WHAT ARE THESE CREATURES WHOSE MINDS AND BODIES WE HAVE OCCUPIED?
A VERY LOW ORDER OF SPECIES.
PERHAPS NOT THE HIGHEST SPECIES ON THIS PLANET.


AT DAWN, AN OLD GELFHERD CAME UP TO THE PASTURE AND DROVE HIS HERD DOWN THE HILLSIDE.
MOVE, YOU LAZY CREATURES... MOVE!

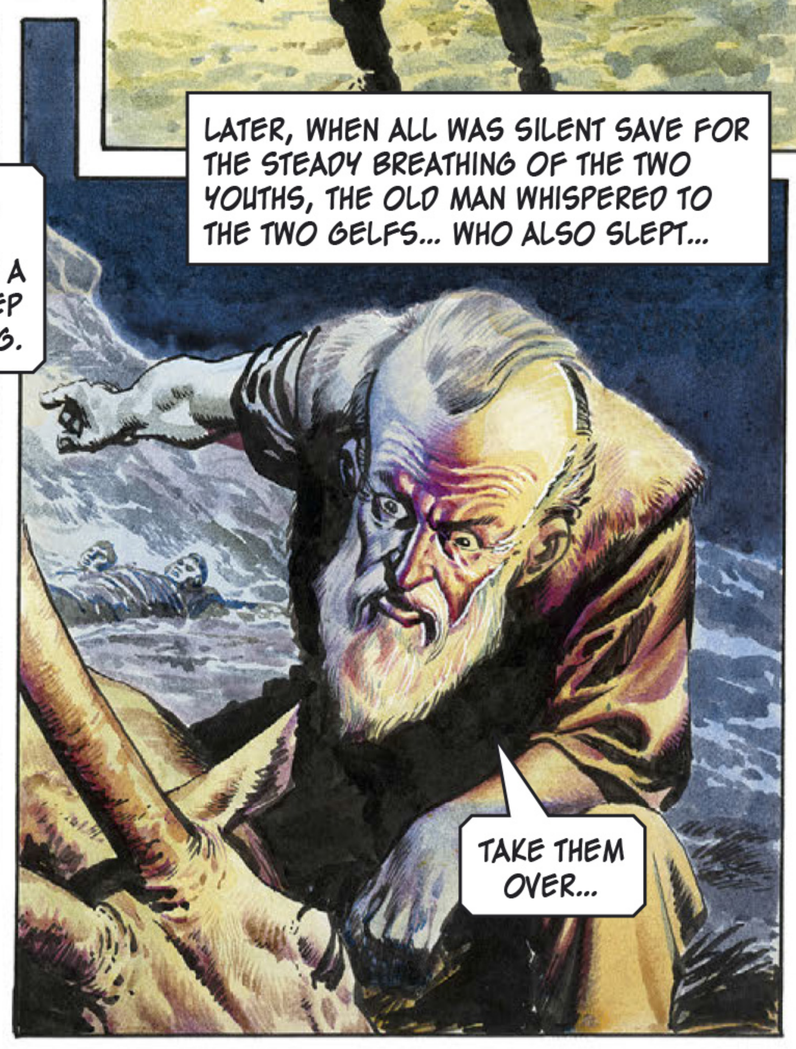

THE OLD MAN WOULD HAVE DIED OF SHOCK IF HE HAD KNOWN THE EVIL INTELLIGENCE AT WORK IN THE MINDS OF THREE OF HIS FLOCK.
HE IS A HIGHER CREATURE.
WHEN HE SLEEPS ONE OF US WILL TAKE HIM OVER.


TWO DAYS LATER, TWO MEN CAME RIDING THROUGH THE VALLEY; THEY WERE JANNO AND KEREN... ON THEIR WAY TO THE COURT OF KING KASSAR OF HERICON WITH A MESSAGE FROM THE TRIGAN EMPEROR.
WE'LL CAMP HERE, KEREN, AND WE SHOULD REACH HERICON CITY BY TOMORROW MIDDAY.

NIGHTS ARE CHILL IN THE HILLS OF HERICON, SO THE TWO FRIENDS MADE A FIRE. LATER, THEY SAW SHAPES MOVING IN THE DARKNESS TOWARDS THEM, AND THEIR HANDS FLEW TO THEIR SWORDS...
WHO'S THAT?
LOOK!

ONLY AN OLD GELDHERD, MASTERS... SEEKING THE WARMTH OF YOUR FIRE, AND A BITE OF FOOD IF YOU CAN SPARE IT.

THE YOUNG COMRADES READILY AGREED, AND THE TRIO ATE TOGETHER. LATER, KEREN AND JANNO LAY DOWN TO SLEEP.
SLEEP WELL, MASTERS... I WILL SIT FOR A WHILE AND KEEP THE FIRE GOING.


LATER, WHEN ALL WAS SILENT SAVE FOR THE STEADY BREATHING OF THE TWO YOUTHS, THE OLD MAN WHISPERED TO THE TWO GELFS... WHO ALSO SLEPT...
TAKE THEM OVER...

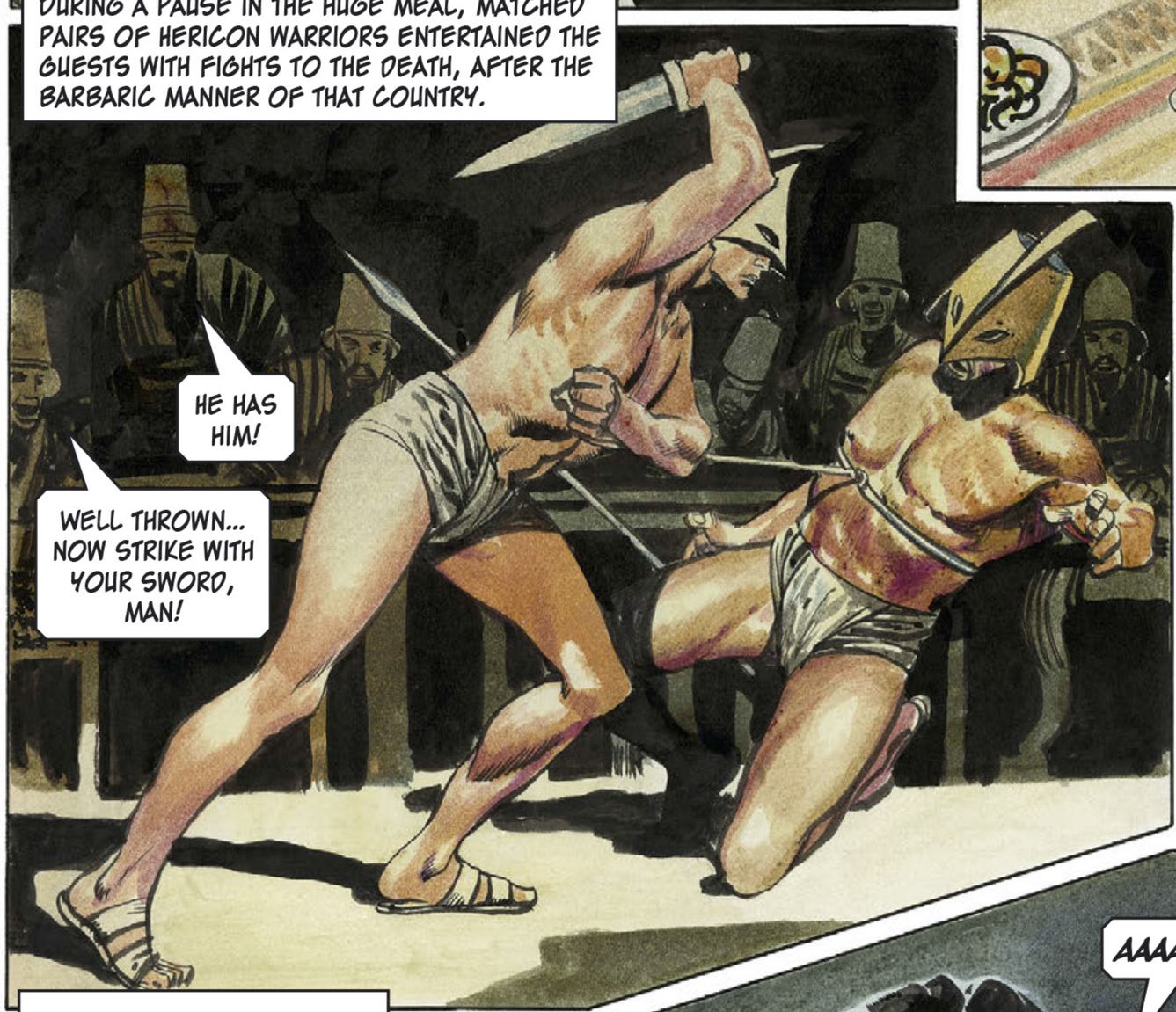
TWO SPHERES ROSE FROM THE SLEEPING GELFS AND HOVERED ABOVE JANNO AND KEREN!

JANNO AND KEREN AWAKENED, BUT ALIEN MINDS DIRECTED THEIR THOUGHTS AND THEIR SPEECH.
THE MIND AND BODY OF THE CREATURE I OCCUPY BELONGS TO ONE NAMED JANNO.
THE CUNNING INTELLIGENCE THAT CONTROLLED THE MIND OF THE OLD GELFHERD SEIZED UPON THE OPPORTUNITY.
AS WE ARE STRANDED ON THIS PLANET, WE MUST OCCUPY THE MINDS AND BODIES OF THE HIGHEST AND MOST POWERFUL CREATURES POSSIBLE, SO THAT WE CAN DOMINATE THE PLANET... I SHALL TAKE OVER THIS KING KASSAR!
...AND MINE IS CALLED KEREN. LIKE THE OTHER CREATURE, AN OFFICER IN THE SERVICE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
EXCELLENT... YOU HAVE BOTH MUCH IMPROVED YOUR POSITION IN THE SPECIES OF THIS PLANET.
THE THREE SET OFF AT DAWN.
THIS MIND OF JANNO TELLS ME THAT WE ARE ON OUR WAY TO THE COURT OF KING KASSAR OF HERICON.
HE IS A GREAT RULER.
SHORTLY BEFORE MIDDAY THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF HERICON CITY, AND WERE SOON AT THE GATES OF THE ROYAL PALACE.
JANNO AND KEREN... OFFICERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, WITH THEIR SERVANT! WE BRING A LETTER FOR YOUR KING!
PASS, TRIGANS!
STERN-FACED KASSAR OF HERICON RECEIVED A LETTER WHICH 'JANNO' HANDED TO HIM.
FROM MY MASTER, HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY THE EMPEROR TRIGO!
ON READING THE LETTER, KING KASSAR'S HARSH FEATURES RELAXED IN A SMILE OF PURE PLEASURE.
HA! MY FRIEND THE EMPEROR TELLS ME HERE THAT HE IS ON HIS WAY TO VISIT US FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE GREAT GAMES. THAT IS EXCELLENT NEWS!

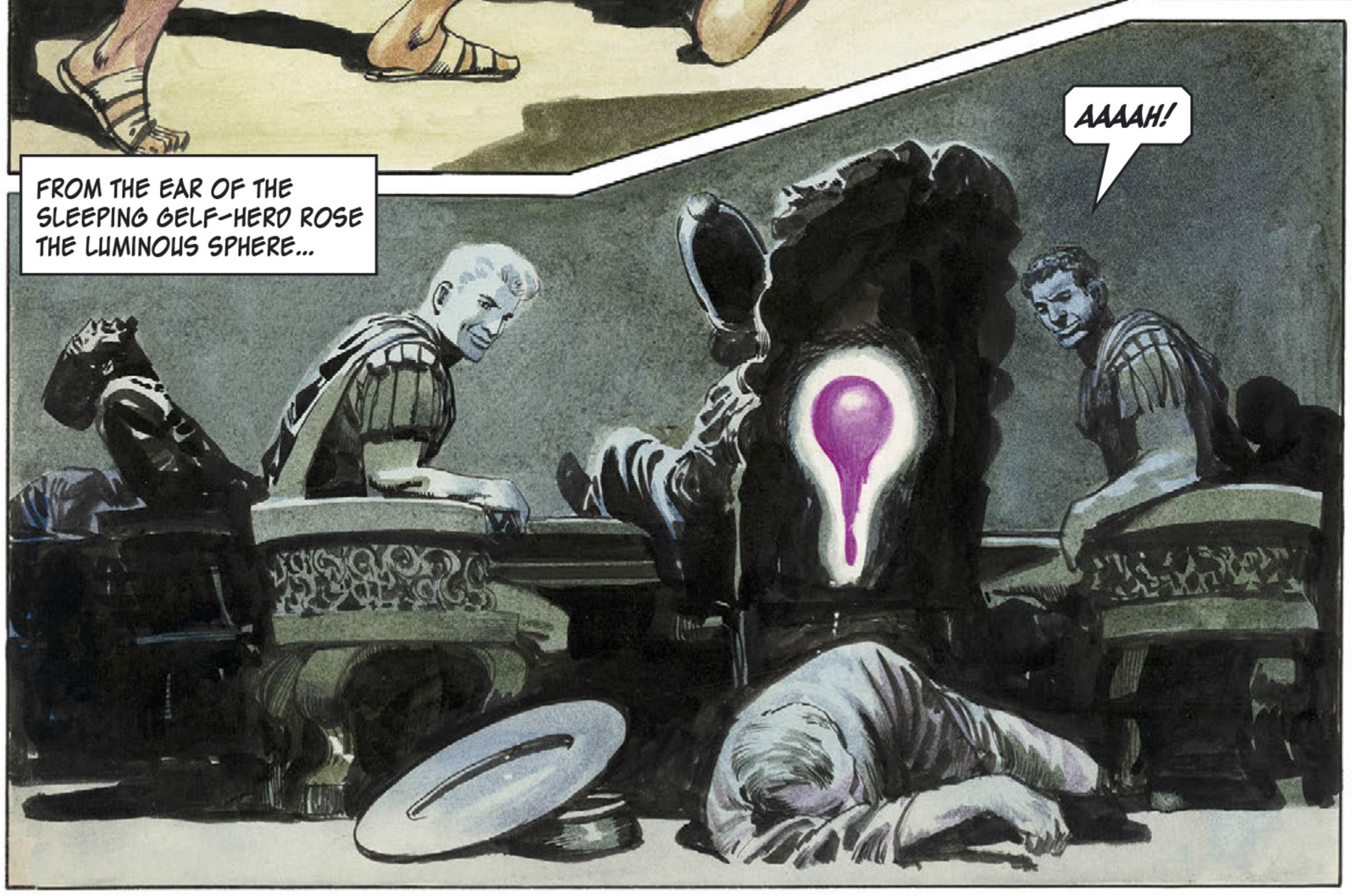
KASSAR ORDERED A FEAST TO BE INSTANTLY SERVED IN HONOUR OF THE MESSENGERS... AND THE THREE NEWCOMERS EXCHANGED A MUTTERED CONVERSATION.
TONIGHT, WHEN HE SLEEPS, I WILL TAKE OVER THE KING!

THE EMPEROR TRIGO IS A GREAT ONE ALSO... THE GREATEST RULER ON THE PLANET. WHEN HE COMES HERE I WILL TAKE HIM OVER!

THE FEAST BEGAN, AND WENT ON FAR INTO THE NIGHT.


DURING A PAUSE IN THE HUGE MEAL, MATCHED PAIRS OF HERICON WARRIORS ENTERTAINED THE GUESTS WITH FIGHTS TO THE DEATH, AFTER THE BARBARIC MANNER OF THAT COUNTRY.
HE HAS HIM!
WELL THROWN... NOW STRIKE WITH YOUR SWORD, MAN!

NOT TILL THE DAWN OF ELEKTON'S TWIN SUNS WAS THERE A SILENCE IN THE VAST HALL, AND KING KASSAR SLEPT WHERE HE SAT.
NOW!


FROM THE EAR OF THE SLEEPING GELF-HERO ROSE THE LUMINOUS SPHERE...
AAAAH!

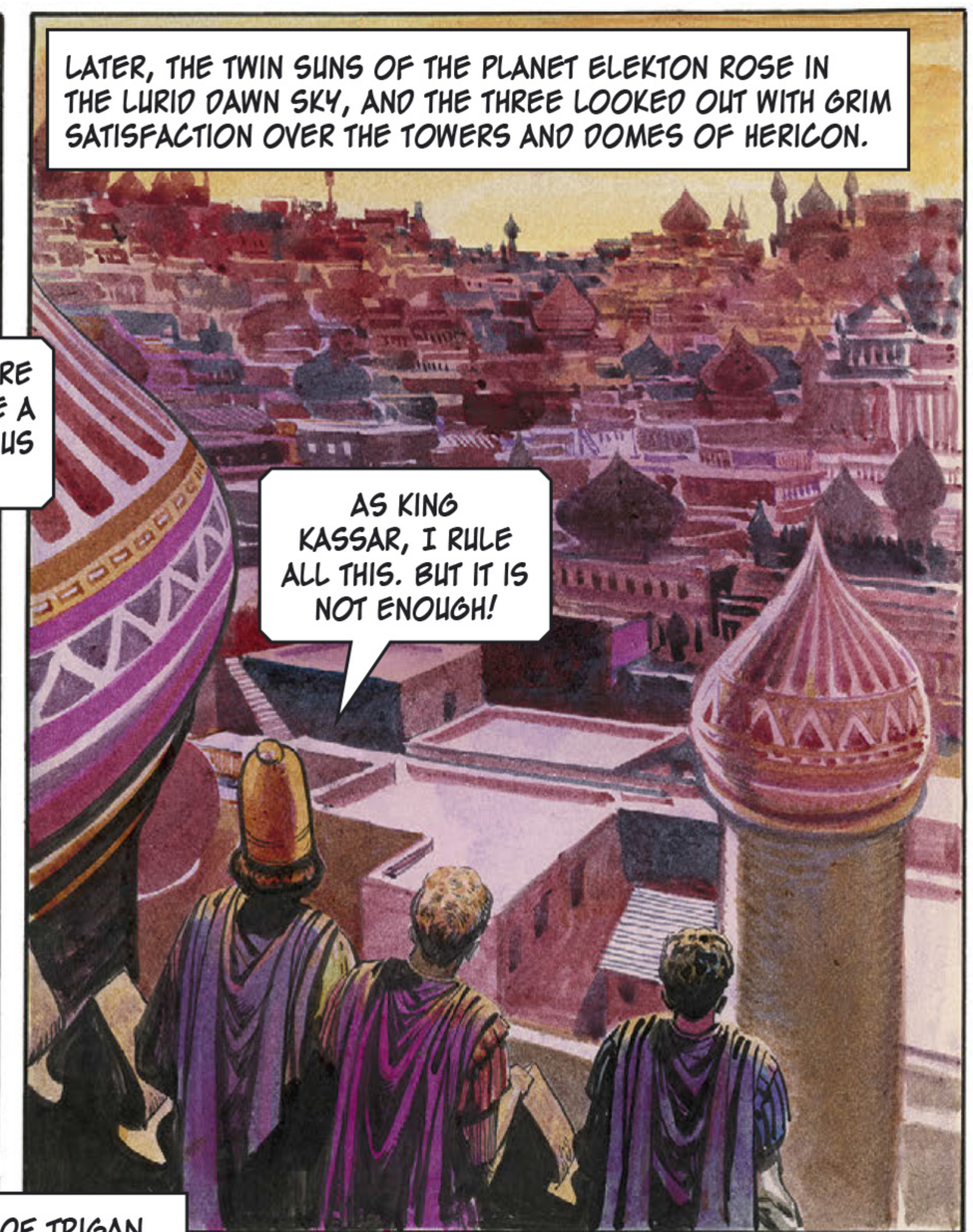
IT HOVERED FOR A FEW MOMENTS OVER THE HEAD OF THE SLEEPING KING... AND THEN...

KASSAR OF HERICON AWOKE. BUT NOW AN ALIEN INTELLIGENCE CONTROLLED HIS MIND AND BODY. HE GLANCED AT HIS TWO COMPANIONS.
GOOD! WITH EVERY MOVE WE IMPROVE OUR POSITION AMONGST THE SPECIES OF THIS PLANET. SOON WE WILL BE THE MASTERS HERE!

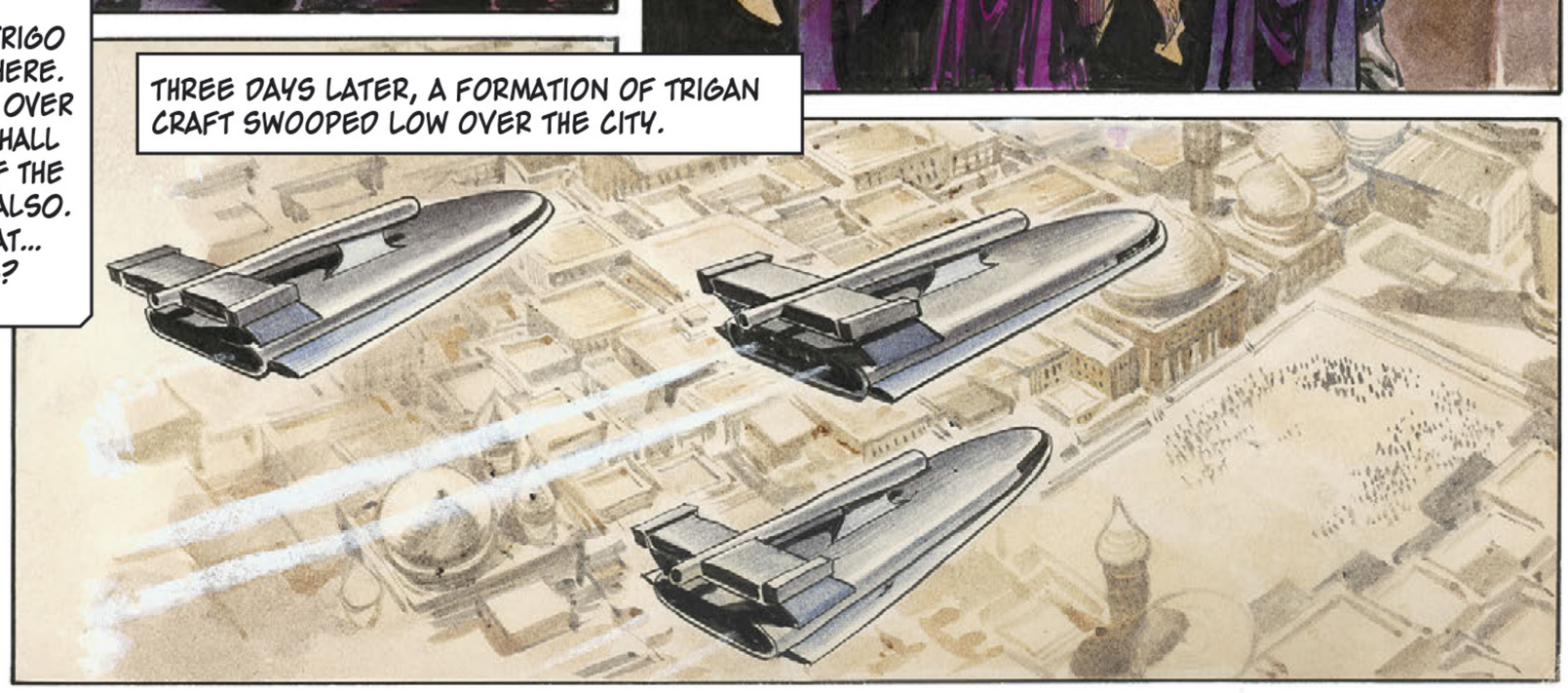
THE THREE TURNED TO REGARD THE OLD HEROSMAN, WHO LAY ASLEEP.
HE WILL AWAKEN HIMSELF. HE WILL KNOW... AND TELL... EVERYTHING!
THEN WE WILL ELIMINATE HIM AT ONCE!

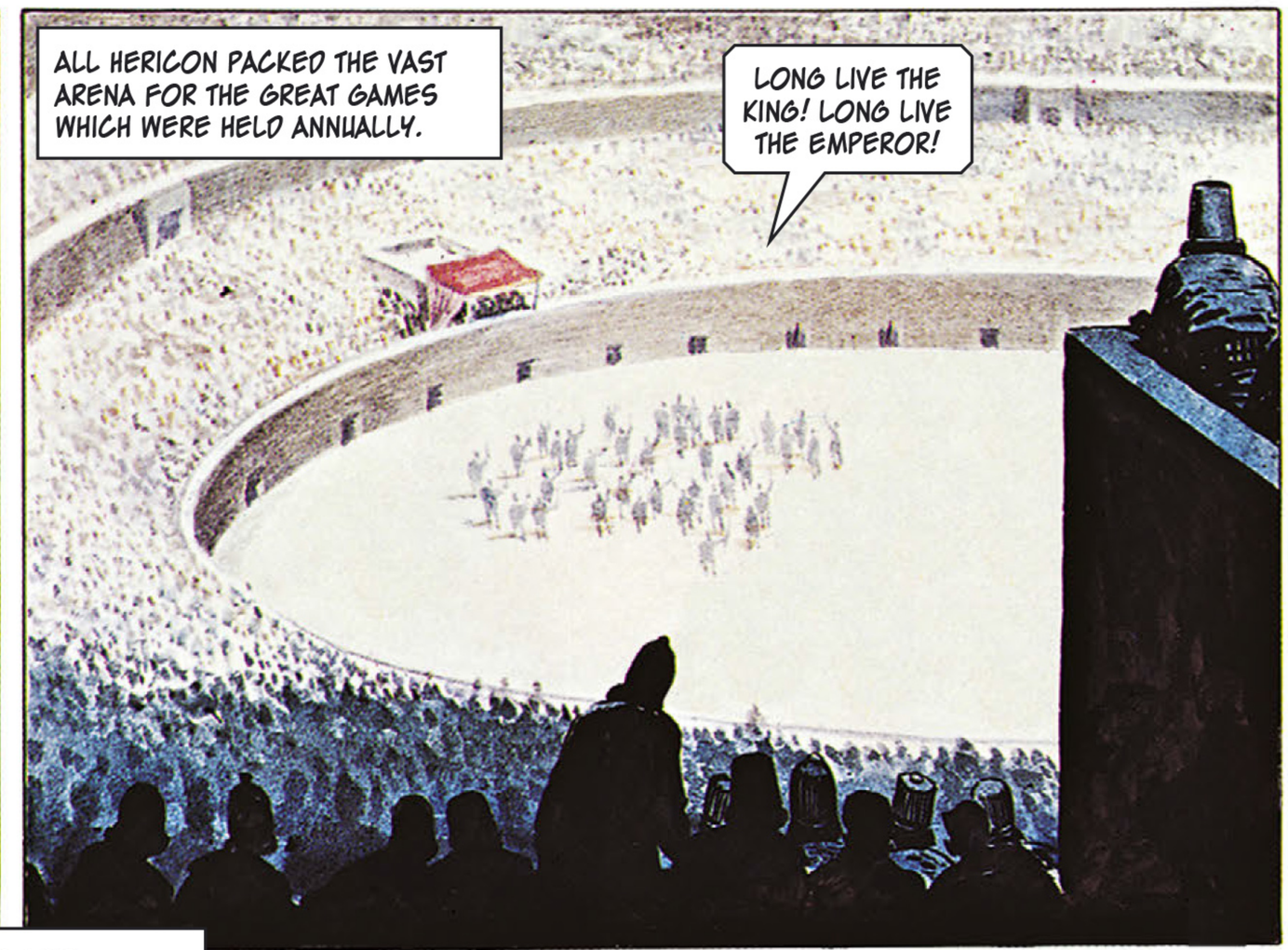
TWO OF THEM CARRIED THE HEROSMAN FROM THE HALL, QUELLING HIS FRANTIC STRUGGLES AND SHUTTING OFF HIS CRIES SO THAT THE SLEEPING FEASTERS WERE NOT AWAKENED.

OUTSIDE WAS A SHEER DROP OVER THE RAMPARTS TO THE GORGE BELOW.
THE CREATURE WILL NOT BE A DANGER TO US NOW.

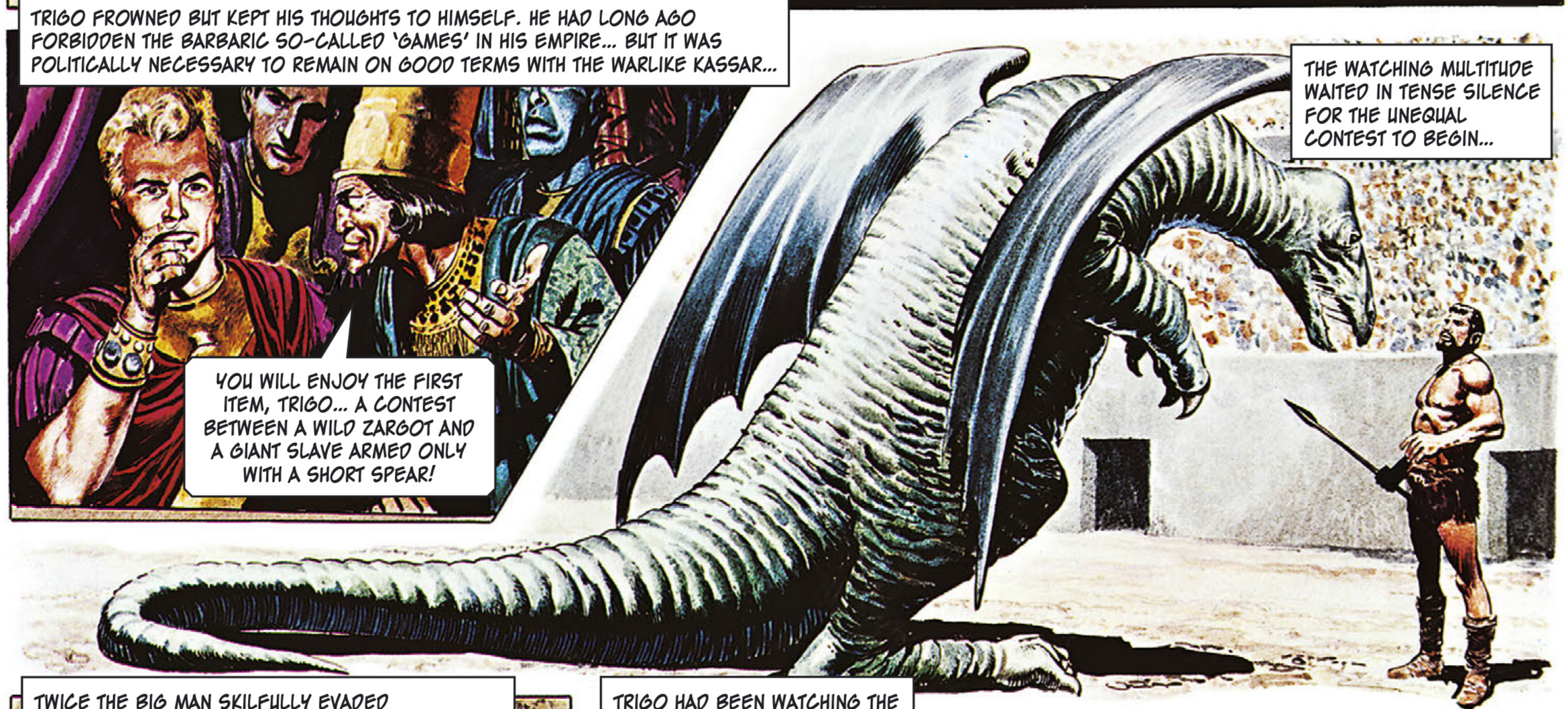

LATER, THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON ROSE IN THE LURID DAWN SKY, AND THE THREE LOOKED OUT WITH GRIM SATISFACTION OVER THE TOWERS AND DOMES OF HERICON.
AS KING KASSAR, I RULE ALL THIS. BUT IT IS NOT ENOUGH!

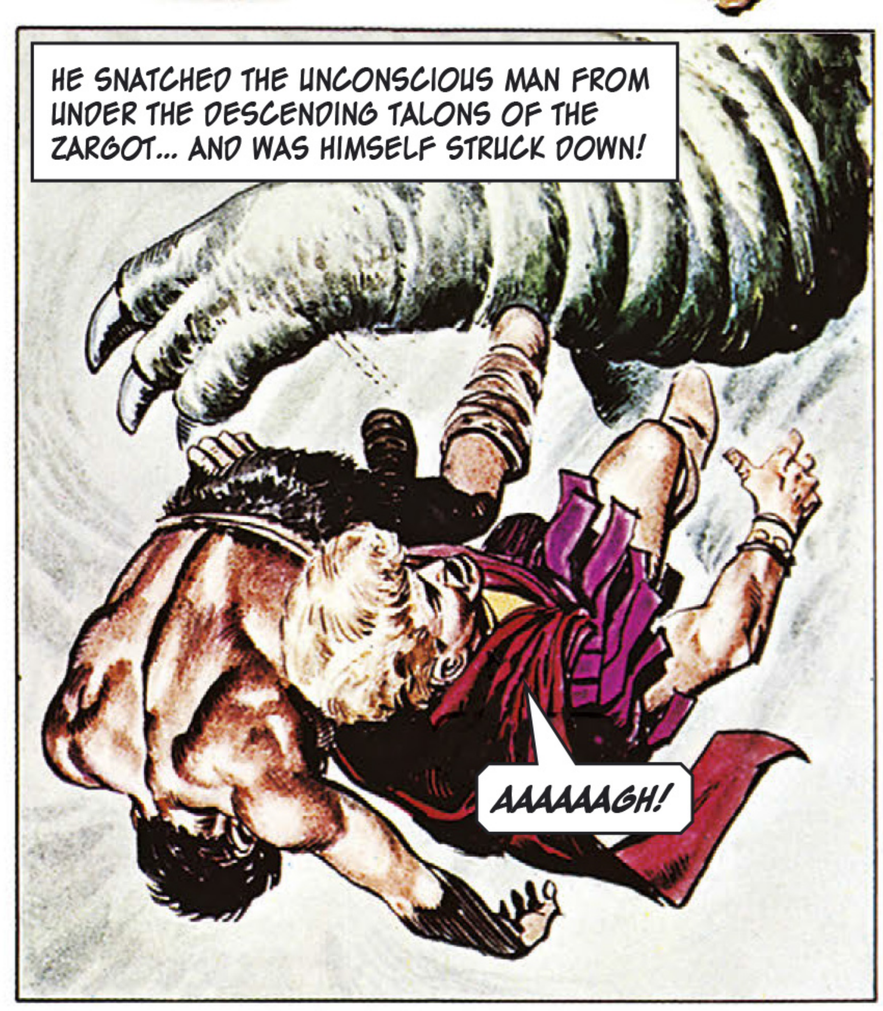
THE EVIL INTELLIGENCE THAT CONTROLLED JANNO ANSWERED...
THE EMPEROR TRIGO IS ON HIS WAY HERE. I WILL TAKE HIM OVER AND THEN WE SHALL BE MASTERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE ALSO. AND AFTER THAT... WHO KNOWS?


THREE DAYS LATER, A FORMATION OF TRIGAN CRAFT SWOOPED LOW OVER THE CITY.



TRIGO FROWNED BUT KEPT HIS THOUGHTS TO HIMSELF. HE HAD LONG AGO FORBIDDEN THE BARBARIC SO-CALLED 'GAMES' IN HIS EMPIRE... BUT IT WAS POLITICALLY NECESSARY TO REMAIN ON GOOD TERMS WITH THE WARLIKE KASSAR...



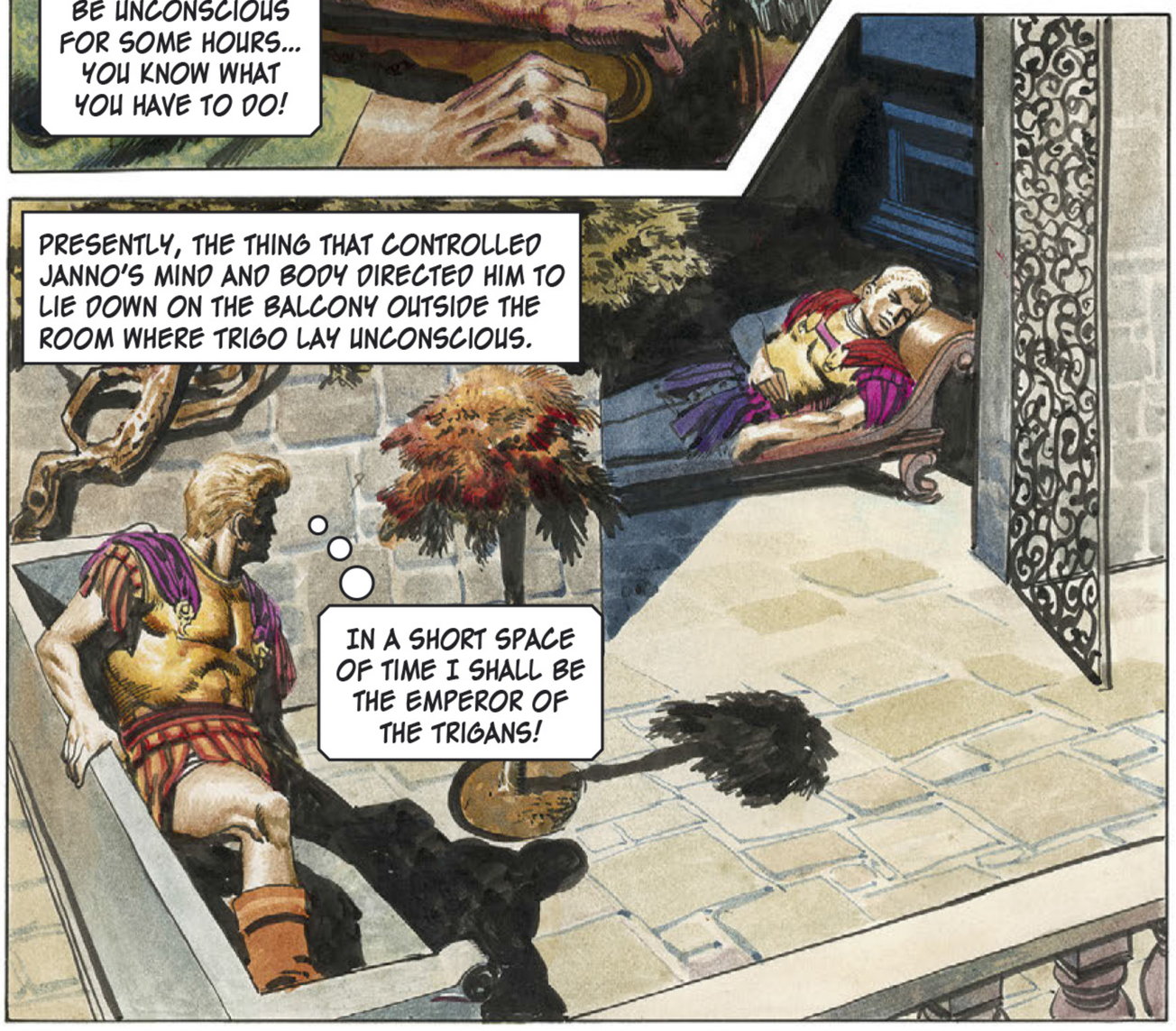


HERICON GUARDS RUSHED INTO THE ARENA AND BEAT OFF THE SNARLING ZARGOT, WHILE OTHERS DRAGGED CLEAR THE TRIGAN EMPEROR AND THE MAN HE HAD SAVED.
THANK THE STARS THE EMPEROR IS STILL ALIVE... WHATEVER POSSESSED HIM TO DO SUCH A FOOLISH THING?
THERE'S NO ACCOUNTING FOR THESE SOFT-HEARTED TRIGANS!

THE ALIEN INTELLIGENCE THAT CONTROLLED THE MIND OF THE HERICON KING SAW ITS OPPORTUNITY AND GAVE AN ORDER.
TAKE THE EMPEROR TO THE PALACE AND MAKE HIM COMFORTABLE. HE WILL SOON RECOVER.

THEN, TURNING TO HIS COMPANIONS...
NATURALLY!
HE WILL BE UNCONSCIOUS FOR SOME HOURS... YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO!

AND YOU KNOW WHAT YOU MUST DO!
YES!


PRESENTLY, THE THING THAT CONTROLLED JANNO'S MIND AND BODY DIRECTED HIM TO LIE DOWN ON THE BALCONY OUTSIDE THE ROOM WHERE TRIGO LAY UNCONSCIOUS.
IN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME I SHALL BE THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS!

SOON HE WAS ASLEEP, AND THEN... THE LUMINOUS SPHERE AROSE FROM OUT OF HIS EAR...

...DRIFTED INTO THE ROOM, AND TOOK OVER THE MIND AND BODY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS TRIGO!

A SHORT WHILE LATER, JANNO AWOKE WITH A START. HE WAS HIMSELF AGAIN... AND HE REMEMBERRED EVERYTHING!
THE THING... THE THING HAS LEFT ME... AND GONE TO... TRIGO!

A SHADOW FELL ACROSS HIM AS HE LEAPT TO HIS FEET. HE SAW THE FACE OF HIS FRIEND, KEREN... AND THE PISTOL AIMED AT HIS CHEST!
KEREN! AAAAH!
YOU KNOW TOO MUCH... AND YOU MUST BE ELIMINATED!

JANNO KNEW THAT IT WAS NOT HIS FRIEND'S MIND THAT DIRECTED THE FINGER THAT PRESSED THE TRIGGER... AND HE SMASHED HIS FIST AGAINST THE OTHER'S JAW.

HE GAZED DOWN AT THE CRUMPLED FIGURE, ALL UNAWARE OF THE PERIL BEHIND HIM!
KEREN... KEREN... HOW CAN I SET YOU FREE OF THE THING THAT HAS TAKEN YOU OVER?

A SMASHING BLOW BROUGHT HIM CRASHING TO THE FLAGSTONES!

HE RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS A FEW MINUTES LATER, TO FIND HIMSELF HELD BY A PAIR OF BRAWNY HERICON GUARDS...
WHAT HAS HAPPENED, IMPERIAL MAJESTY?
THIS TRAITOR TRIED TO ASSASSINATE ME! TAKE HIM DOWN TO THE COURTYARD AND EXECUTE HIM!
...AND THE HARSH VOICE OF TRIGO DINNED IN HIS EARS!

THE HERICON GUARDS SEIZED JANNO AND DRAGGED HIM AWAY.
THERE WILL BE NO TRIAL... DISPATCH HIM IMMEDIATELY!

STILL HALF-DAZED FROM THE BLOW HE HAD RECEIVED, JANNO TRIED TO PROTEST...
LISTEN TO ME... YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME... THE MAN YOU SEE BACK THERE ISN'T REALLY THE EMPEROR TRIGO AT ALL!
HAW, HAW!... DO YOU HEAR THAT?
SOME CURS WILL TELL ANY KIND OF STORY TO TRY TO SAVE THEMSELVES, BUT THIS IS THE BEST I'VE EVER HEARD! NOT THE EMPEROR TRIGO... HA!

THEY TOOK HIM DOWN TO THE COURTYARD. MORE GUARDS ARRIVED ON THE SCENE, ONE BEARING A GREAT EXECUTIONER'S SWORD.
WELL... WILL YOU KNEEL AND MEET YOUR END LIKE A MAN, OR DO YOU HAVE TO BE FORCED TO YOUR KNEES?

THEN JANNO ACTED!
UUUUGH!
HEY!!

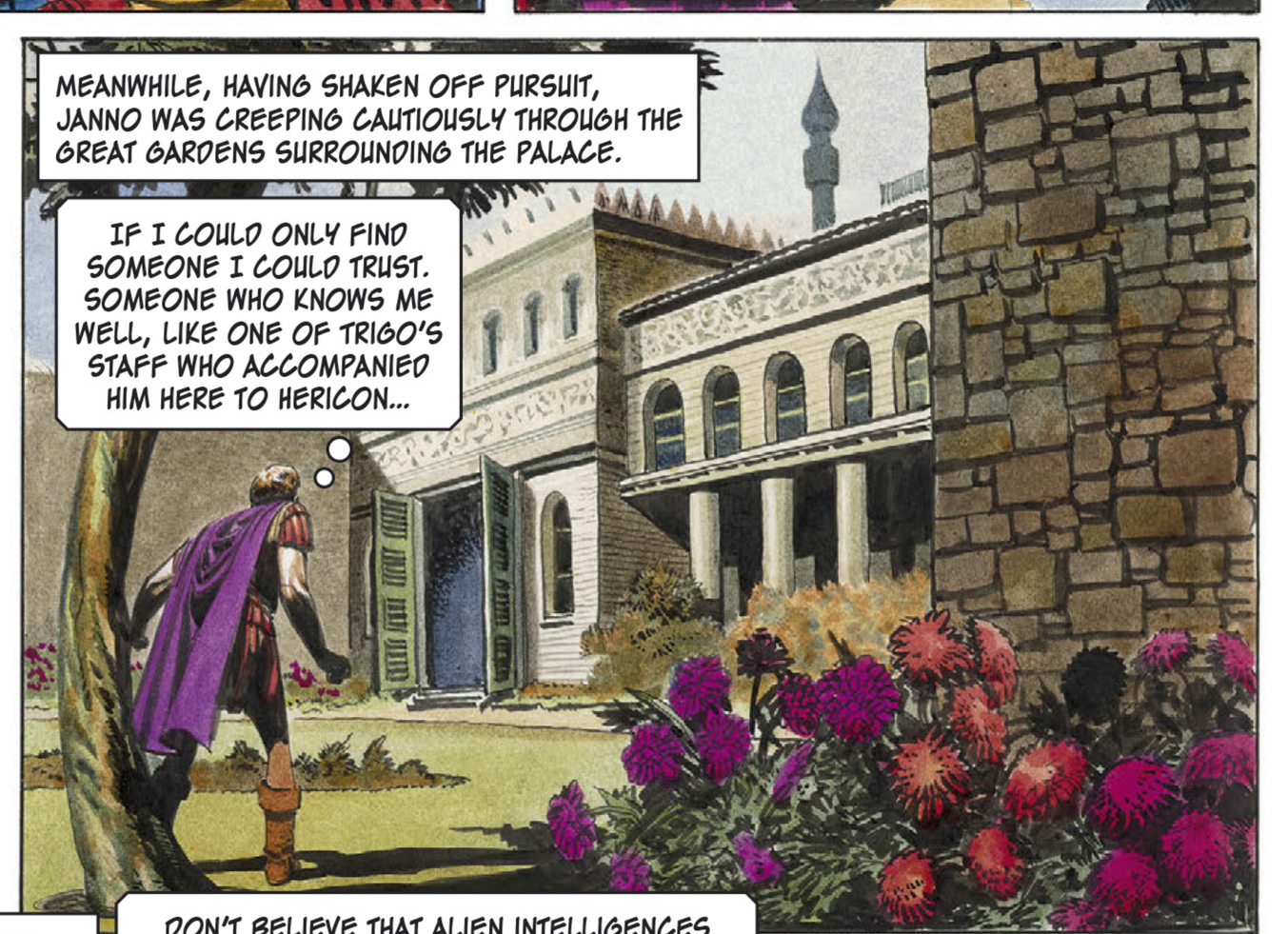
THE WAY TO THE HIGH WALL WAS BARRED BY ANGRY, SHOUTING GUARDS. JANNO DODGED A SPEAR-THRUST AND SEIZED THE SHAFT OF THE WEAPON, TWISTING IT FROM THE MAN'S HAND.
HE'S GETTING AWAY! ...RAISE THE ALARM!
TWENTY SWIFT PACES TO THE WALL... THEN, PLANTING THE SHARP SPEAR-POINT AGAINST THE FLAGSTONES, HE SOARED INTO THE AIR...

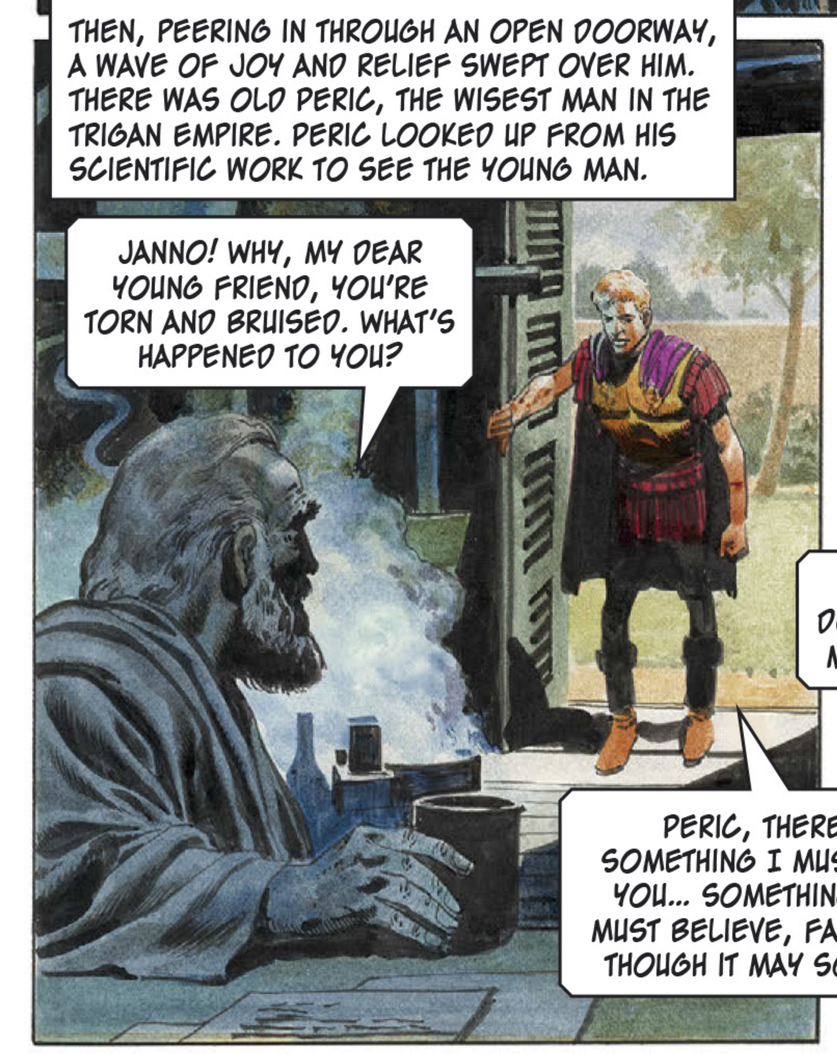
THE NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO THE ROYAL APARTMENTS IN THE PALACE.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY, I REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT THE CONDEMNED JANNO HAS ESCAPED, AND IS AT LARGE IN THE CITY!
FIND HIM! CUT HIM DOWN ON SIGHT!

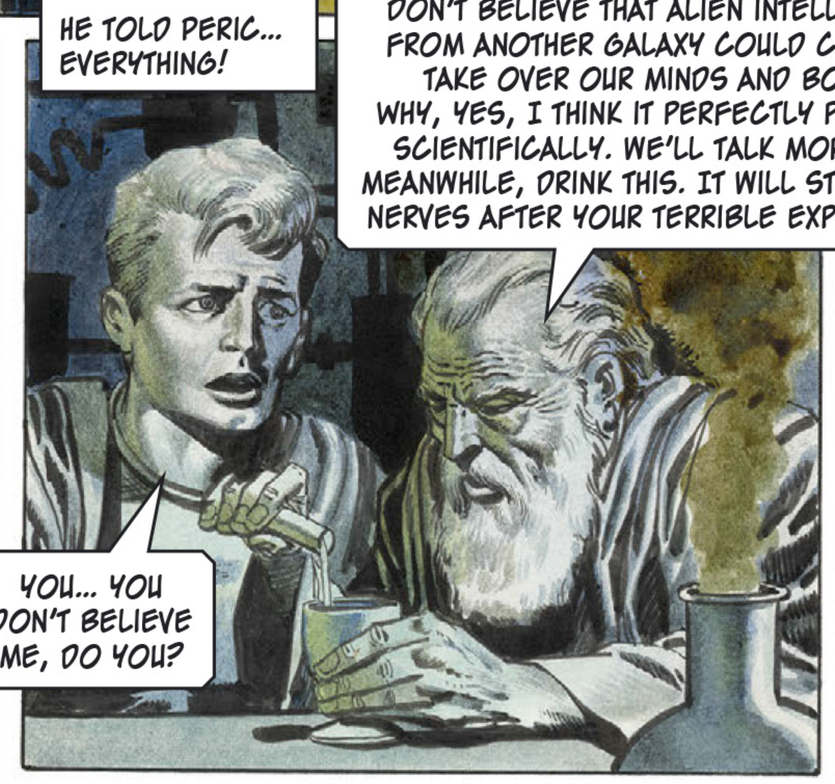
ALONE AGAIN, THE THREE ALIEN INTELLIGENCES WHO CONTROLLED THE MINDS AND BODIES OF TRIGO, KASSAR AND KEREN PONDERED ON THIS NEW PROBLEM.
JANNO KNOWS... EVERYTHING!
AND HE WILL TALK!
SO? WHO WILL BELIEVE HIM? BY TELLING THE TRUTH, EVERYONE WILL SIMPLY BELIEVE THAT HE IS MAD!

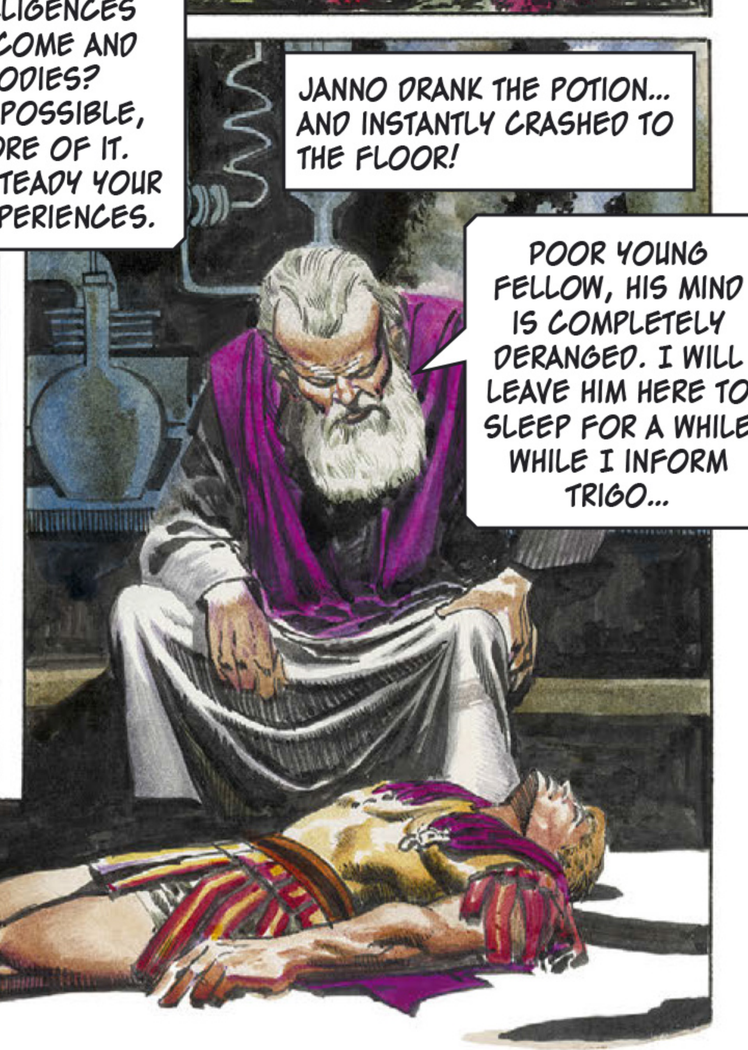
FORGET JANNO! BACK TO OUR PLAN, WHICH IS THIS... THE CONQUEST OF THE PLANET ELEKTON!

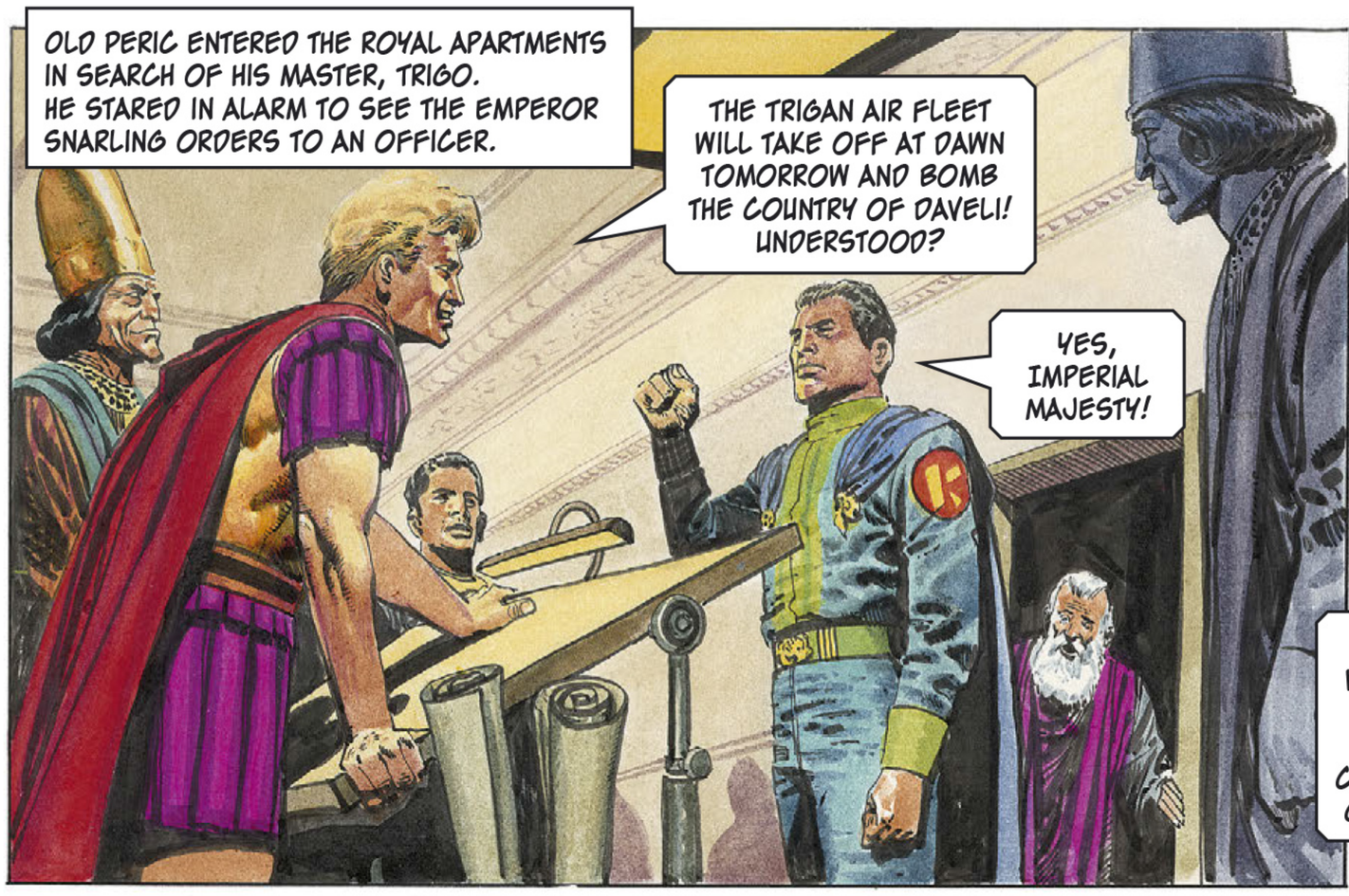
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AND THE KINGDOM OF HERICON WILL MARCH AGAINST THE OTHER INHABITANTS OF THIS PLANET...THERE WILL BE NO DECLARATION OF WAR...
WE WILL STRIKE WITHOUT WARNING... BOMB ALL AIRFIELDS...
DESTROY THEIR SEA-FLEETS IN HARBOUR...


MEANWHILE, HAVING SHAKEN OFF PURSUIT, JANNO WAS CREEPING CAUTIOUSLY THROUGH THE GREAT GARDENS SURROUNDING THE PALACE.
IF I COULD ONLY FIND SOMEONE I COULD TRUST. SOMEONE WHO KNOWS ME WELL, LIKE ONE OF TRIGO'S STAFF WHO ACCOMPANIED HIM HERE TO HERICON...


THEN, PEERING IN THROUGH AN OPEN DOORWAY, A WAVE OF JOY AND RELIEF SWEPT OVER HIM. THERE WAS OLD PERIC, THE WISEST MAN IN THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. PERIC LOOKED UP FROM HIS SCIENTIFIC WORK TO SEE THE YOUNG MAN.
JANNO! WHY, MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND, YOU'RE TORN AND BRUISED. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?
PERIC, THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU... SOMETHING YOU MUST BELIEVE, FANTASTIC THOUGH IT MAY SOUND...


HE TOLD PERIC... EVERYTHING!
YOU... YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, DO YOU?
DON'T BELIEVE THAT ALIEN INTELLIGENCES FROM ANOTHER GALAXY COULD COME AND TAKE OVER OUR MINDS AND BODIES? WHY, YES, I THINK IT PERFECTLY POSSIBLE, SCIENTIFICALLY. WE'LL TALK MORE OF IT. MEANWHILE, DRINK THIS. IT WILL STEADY YOUR NERVES AFTER YOUR TERRIBLE EXPERIENCES.


JANNO DRANK THE POTION... AND INSTANTLY CRASHED TO THE FLOOR!
POOR YOUNG FELLOW, HIS MIND IS COMPLETELY DERANGED. I WILL LEAVE HIM HERE TO SLEEP FOR A WHILE WHILE I INFORM TRIGO...


OLD PERIC ENTERED THE ROYAL APARTMENTS IN SEARCH OF HIS MASTER, TRIGO. HE STARED IN ALARM TO SEE THE EMPEROR SNARLING ORDERS TO AN OFFICER.
THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET WILL TAKE OFF AT DAWN TOMORROW AND BOMB THE COUNTRY OF DAVELI! UNDERSTOOD?
YES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!

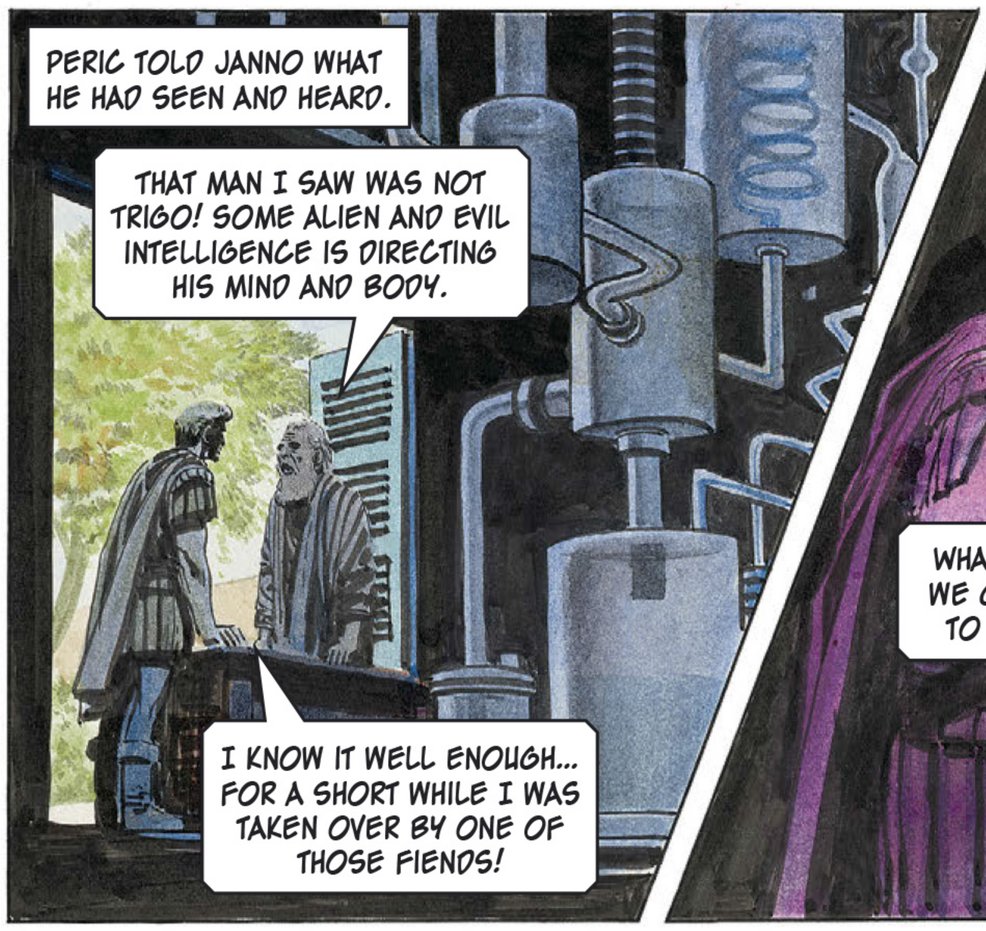
KING KASSAR OF HERICON ALSO GAVE HIS ORDERS.
ADMIRAL! YOU WILL TAKE THE HERICON SEA FLEET AT SUNSET AND BOMBARD THE CITIES ON THE SOUTHERN COASTLINE OF VICTRIS!

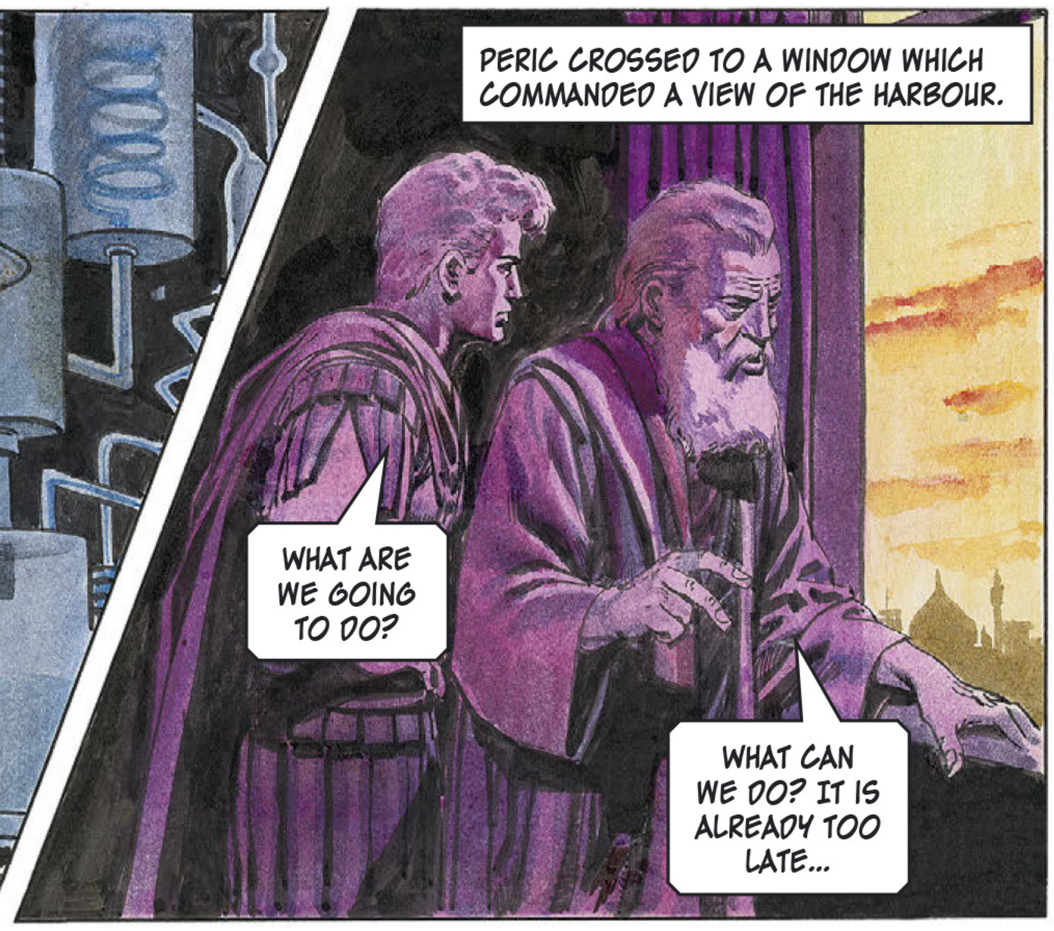
PERIC MET THE WILD EYES OF THE MAN HE BELIEVED TO BE THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS.
TRIGO... MY EMPEROR... OLD FRIEND. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
IT MEANS, PERIC, THAT KASSAR AND I WILL BE MASTERS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WITHIN A VERY FEW DAYS!

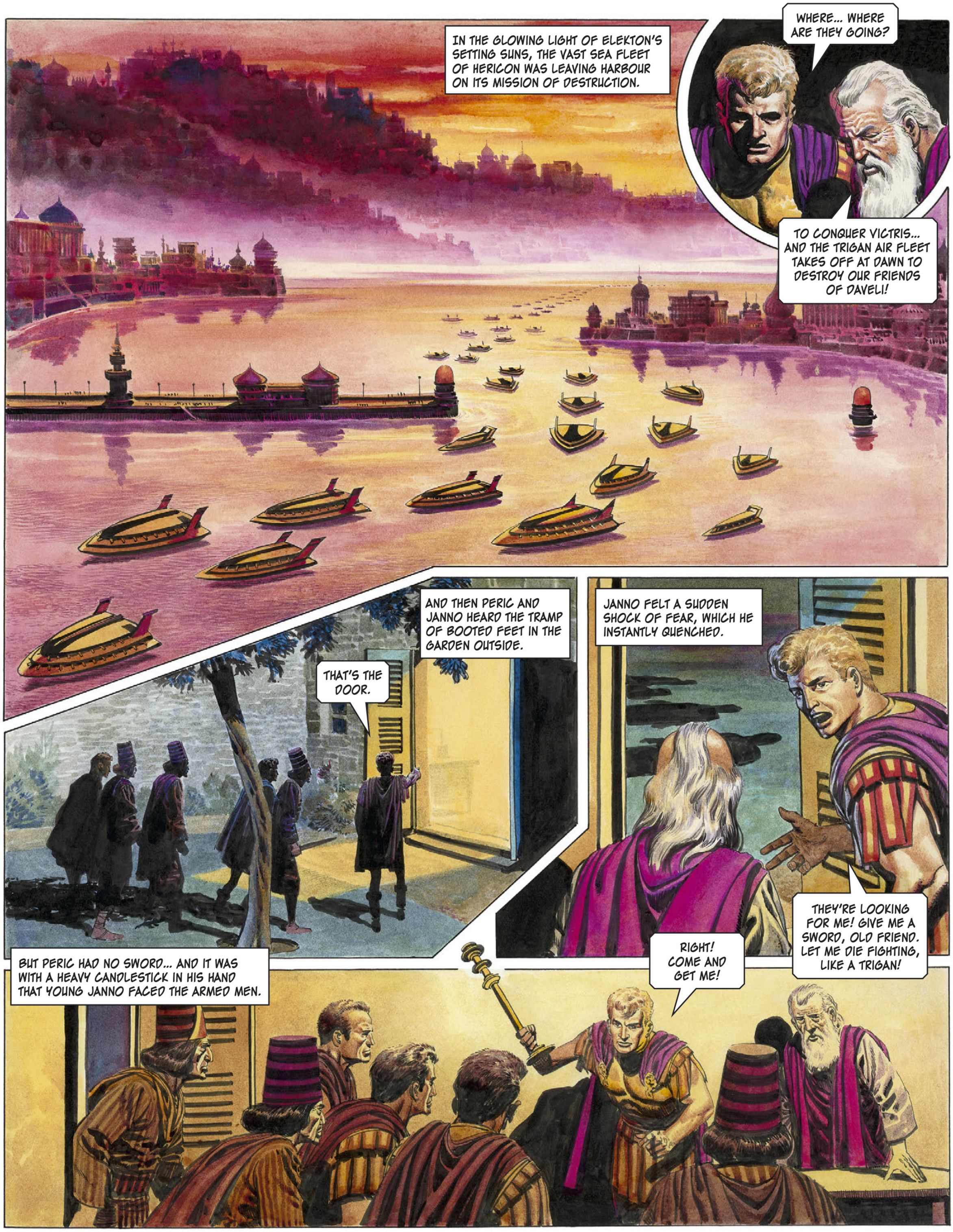
THE OLD MAN LEFT THE APARTMENT, HIS MIND IN A WHIRL.
IT CAN'T BE TRUE. IT CAN'T. AND YET...

RETURNING TO HIS STUDY, PERIC FOUND JANNO RAISING HIMSELF, DIZZILY, TO HIS FEET.
THAT DRINK YOU GAVE ME... IT WAS... DRUGGED...
YES, MY YOUNG FRIEND...

I THOUGHT YOU WERE DERANGED IN YOUR MIND. BUT NOW...
YOU MEAN... YOU BELIEVE ME NOW... ABOUT TRIGO AND THE OTHER TWO?


PERIC TOLD JANNO WHAT HE HAD SEEN AND HEARD.
THAT MAN I SAW WAS NOT TRIGO! SOME ALIEN AND EVIL INTELLIGENCE IS DIRECTING HIS MIND AND BODY.
I KNOW IT WELL ENOUGH... FOR A SHORT WHILE I WAS TAKEN OVER BY ONE OF THOSE FIENDS!


PERIC CROSSED TO A WINDOW WHICH COMMANDED A VIEW OF THE HARBOUR.
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
WHAT CAN WE DO? IT IS ALREADY TOO LATE...

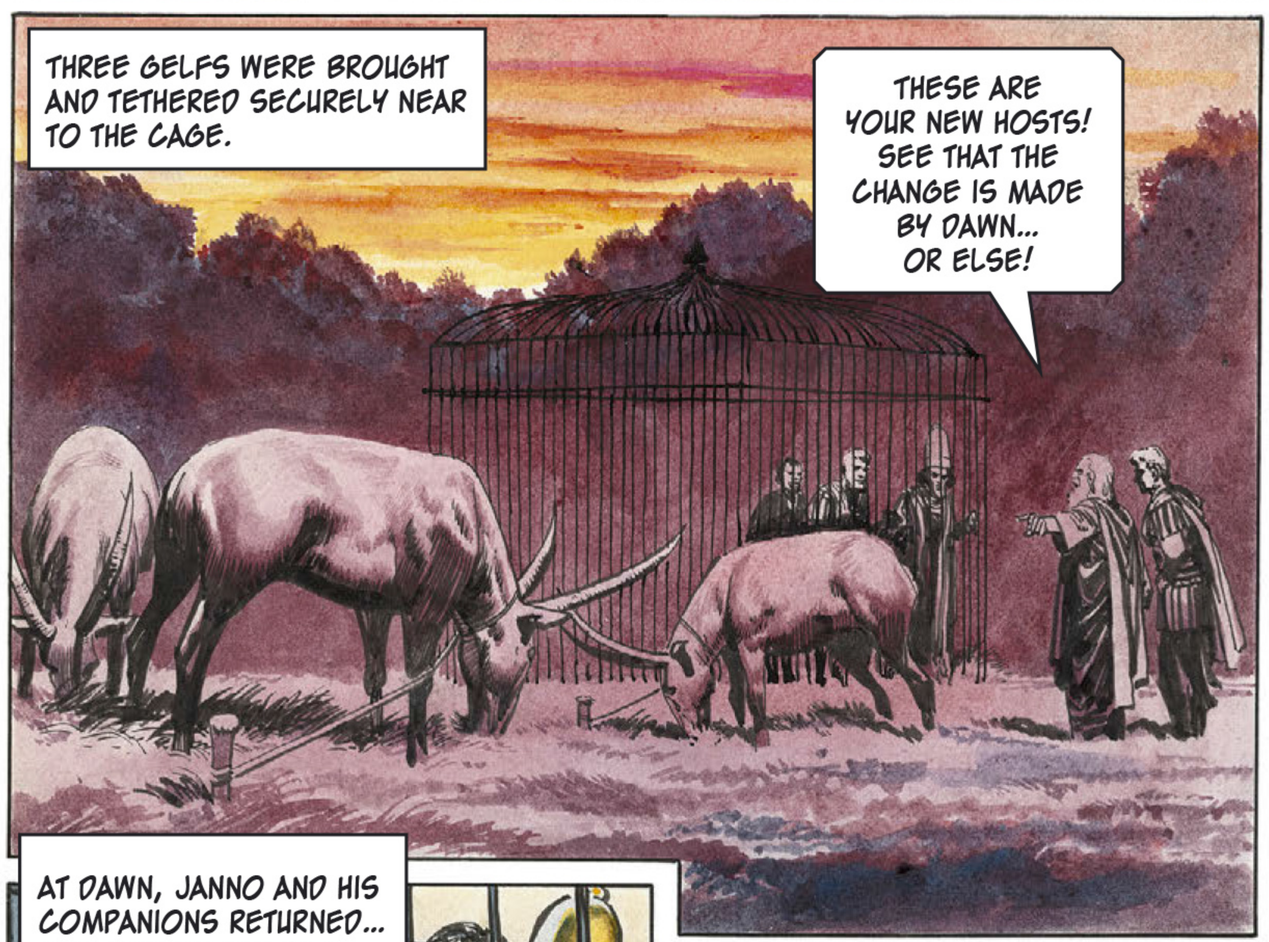

IN THE GLOWING LIGHT OF ELEKTON'S SETTING SUNS, THE VAST SEA FLEET OF HERICON WAS LEAVING HARBOUR ON ITS MISSION OF DESTRUCTION.
WHERE... WHERE ARE THEY GOING?
TO CONQUER VICTRIS... AND THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET TAKES OFF AT DAWN TO DESTROY OUR FRIENDS OF DAVELI!
AND THEN PERIC AND JANNO HEARD THE TRAMP OF BOOTED FEET IN THE GARDEN OUTSIDE.
THAT'S THE DOOR.
JANNO FELT A SUDDEN SHOCK OF FEAR, WHICH HE INSTANTLY QUENCHED.
THEY'RE LOOKING FOR ME! GIVE ME A SWORD, OLD FRIEND. LET ME DIE FIGHTING, LIKE A TRIGAN!
BUT PERIC HAD NO SWORD... AND IT WAS WITH A HEAVY CANDLESTICK IN HIS HAND THAT YOUNG JANNO FACED THE ARMED MEN.
RIGHT! COME AND GET ME!

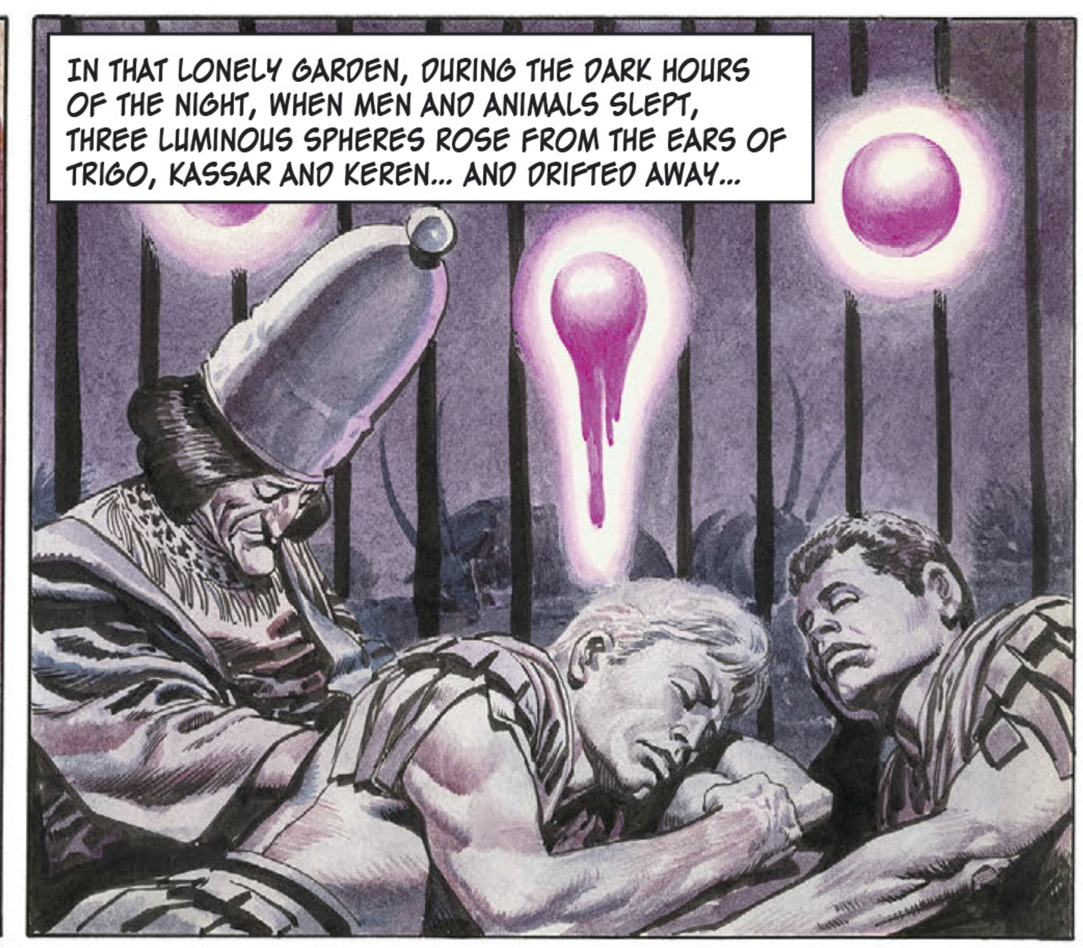
JANNO FACED THE ARMED MEN FEARLESSLY, BUT, TO HIS ASTONISHMENT, THEY MADE NO ATTEMPT TO ATTACK HIM.
WELL... WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
WE MEAN YOU NO HARM, JANNO. THAT IS NOT OUR PURPOSE FOR COMING INTO THE PALACE BY A BACK ENTRANCE...
THREE WERE TRIGAN OFFICERS WHOM JANNO KNEW WELL, AND THREE WORE THE TRAPPINGS OF THE HERICON ARMY.
WE ARE MAKING A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SAVE THE WHOLE PLANET FROM DISASTER... BY OVERTHROWING THE EMPEROR AND THE KING!
DO YOU HEAR THAT, JANNO? WE HAVE ALLIES AGAINST THOSE EVIL CREATURES!
WE MUST ACT SWIFTLY, AND RUTHLESSLY. THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME!
THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO THE ROYAL APARTMENTS. THERE WAS A BRIEF, BUT FURIOUS FIGHT WITH THE GUARDS WHO TRIED TO BAR THEIR WAY...
WHEN THEY BURST INTO THE ROOM WHERE THE SINISTER TRIO STOOD, THE EVIL INTELLIGENCE THAT DIRECTED THE MIND OF TRIGO SAW JANNO... AND KNEW THAT SOMETHING WAS AMISS...
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
YES, IT IS I! MAKE A MOVE AND YOU ARE DEAD!
ORDERS WERE IMMEDIATELY SENT TO THE TRIGAN AND HERICON FLEETS, IN THE NAMES OF TRIGO AND KASSAR, TO RETURN TO THEIR BASES. THEN THE SINISTER TRIO WERE TAKEN TO A REMOTE PART OF THE PALACE GARDENS... TO A CAGE WHICH HAD ONCE CONTAINED WILD BEASTS...
IN WITH YOU!

JANNO AIMED HIS PISTOL THROUGH THE BARS, AND SPOKE WITH GRIM DETERMINATION.
I GIVE YOU THE SPACE OF TEN BREATHS. IN THAT TIME YOU MUST AGREE TO LEAVE THE MINDS AND BODIES YOU OCCUPY, OR I WILL KILL TRIGO, KASSAR AND MY BEST FRIEND KEREN. AND YOU FIENDS, I PRESUME, WILL PERISH WITH THEM!

THE ALIEN INTELLIGENCES PANICKED...
WE CANNOT LEAVE THESE BODIES!
AS LUMINOUS SPHERES WE ARE ONLY ABLE TO SURVIVE FOR A FEW MOMENTS IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF YOUR PLANET!
WE NEED TO TAKE OVER SOME OTHER CREATURE!

THE WISE OLD PERIC SMILED GRIMLY.
SO YOU NEED TO TAKE OVER SOME OTHER CREATURE. WELL, I THINK THAT CAN BE ARRANGED!


THREE GELFS WERE BROUGHT AND TETHERED SECURELY NEAR TO THE CAGE.
THESE ARE YOUR NEW HOSTS! SEE THAT THE CHANGE IS MADE BY DAWN... OR ELSE!


IN THAT LONELY GARDEN, DURING THE DARK HOURS OF THE NIGHT, WHEN MEN AND ANIMALS SLEPT, THREE LUMINOUS SPHERES ROSE FROM THE EARS OF TRIGO, KASSAR AND KEREN... AND DRIFTED AWAY...

AT DAWN, JANNO AND HIS COMPANIONS RETURNED... AND OPENED THE CAGE...
IS IT... REALLY YOU... MY UNCLE?
YES, JANNO! ALL ELEKTON IS IN YOUR DEBT!

A TRIGAN OFFICER RAISED HIS SWORD ABOVE THE SHRINKING GELFS...
NO! SPARE THEM! THEY DON'T DESERVE IT, BUT THEY SHALL LIVE OUT THEIR LIFE SPAN AS GELFS!

THE GELF IS A LONG-LIVED CREATURE, AND THE THREE IN THE CAGE BECAME A TARGET FOR SIGHTSEERS FROM ALL OVER ELEKTON. THEY WERE WELL-TREATED...
BUT NO ONE EVER DARED TO SLEEP ANYWHERE NEAR THAT FATEFUL CAGE!

XII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE REIGN OF THARA

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 298 – 316

30th September 1967 – 3rd February 1968

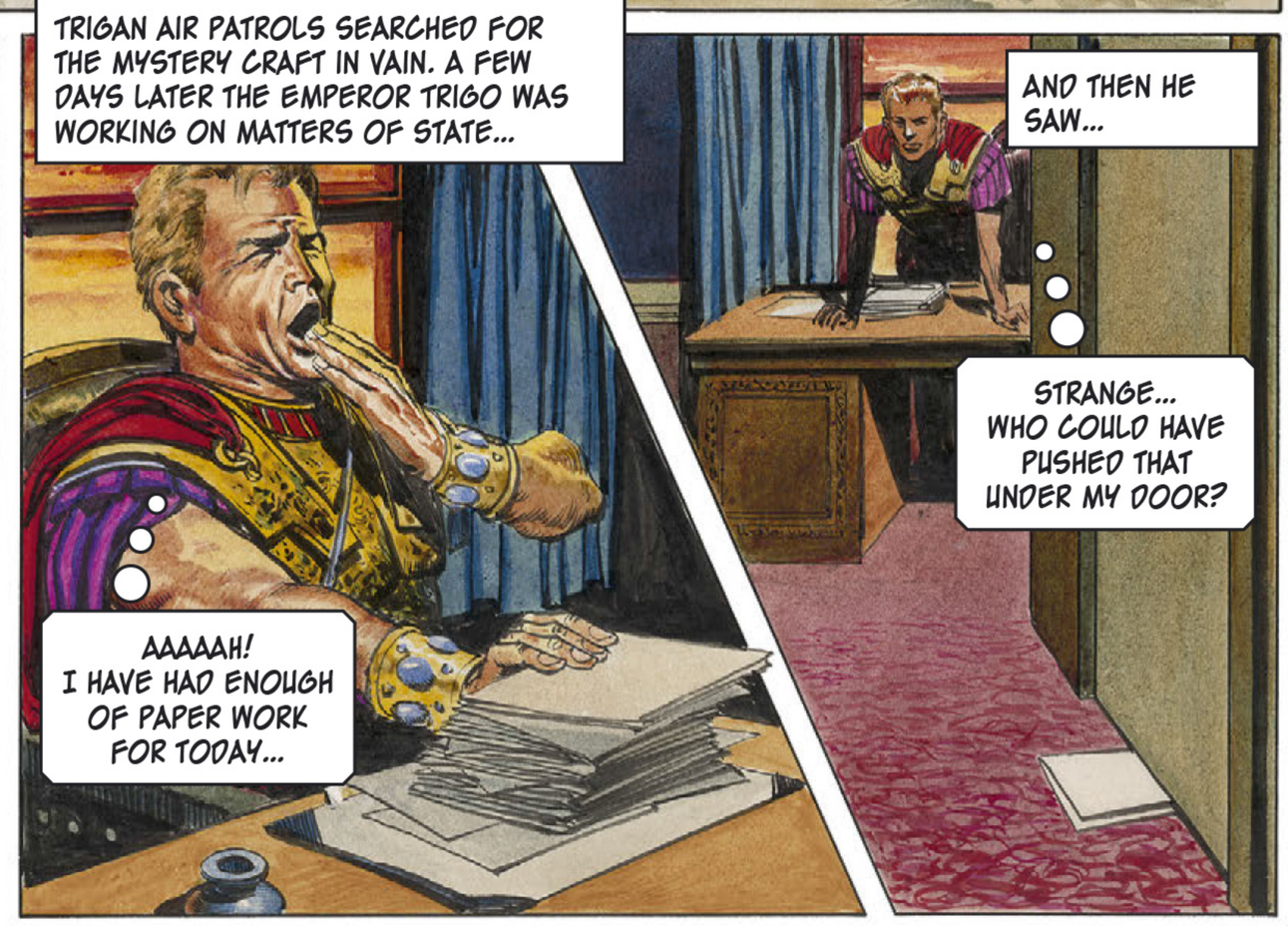
A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE GATES OF TRIGAN CITY, A PARTY OF CONVICTED CRIMINALS WERE LABOURING IN THEIR CHAINS TO BUILD A NEW ROAD...
WORK, YOU ANIMALS! WORK!

IT CAME FROM OUT OF THE SUN, SO THAT NO ONE NOTICED IT TILL IT WAS UPON THEM... A BLACK-PAINTED CRAFT. ITS GUNS STABBED FLAME AND THE GUARDS WERE SCATTERED.
AAAAAAAH!

THE CRAFT LANDED BY THE SHRINKING PRISONERS, AND TWO BLACK-GARBED FIGURES GOT OUT...
WHICH OF YOU IS NAMED TASSIG? SPEAK!
I... I AM TASSIG!

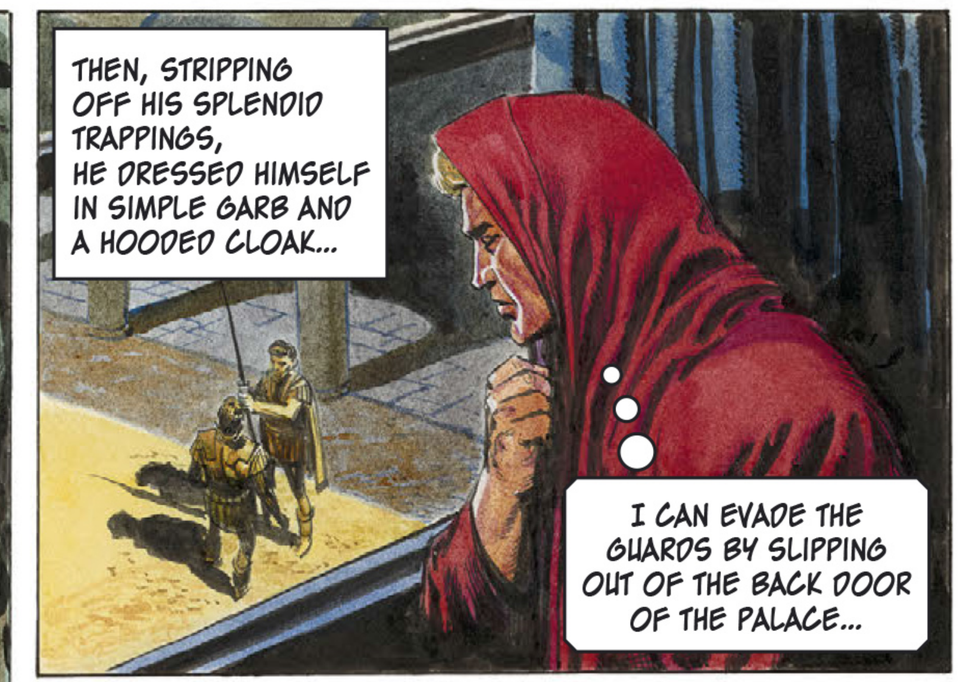
THE BLAST OF A PISTOL SHATTERED THE CHAIN TO WHICH THE PRISONER WAS SECURED.
GET INTO THE CRAFT, TASSIG! MOVE!

MORE GUARDS RAN OUT FROM THE CITY IN TIME TO SEE THE STRANGE BLACK CRAFT STREAKING TOWARDS THE HORIZON.
ONE OF THEM'S ESCAPING!
RAISE THE ALARM!

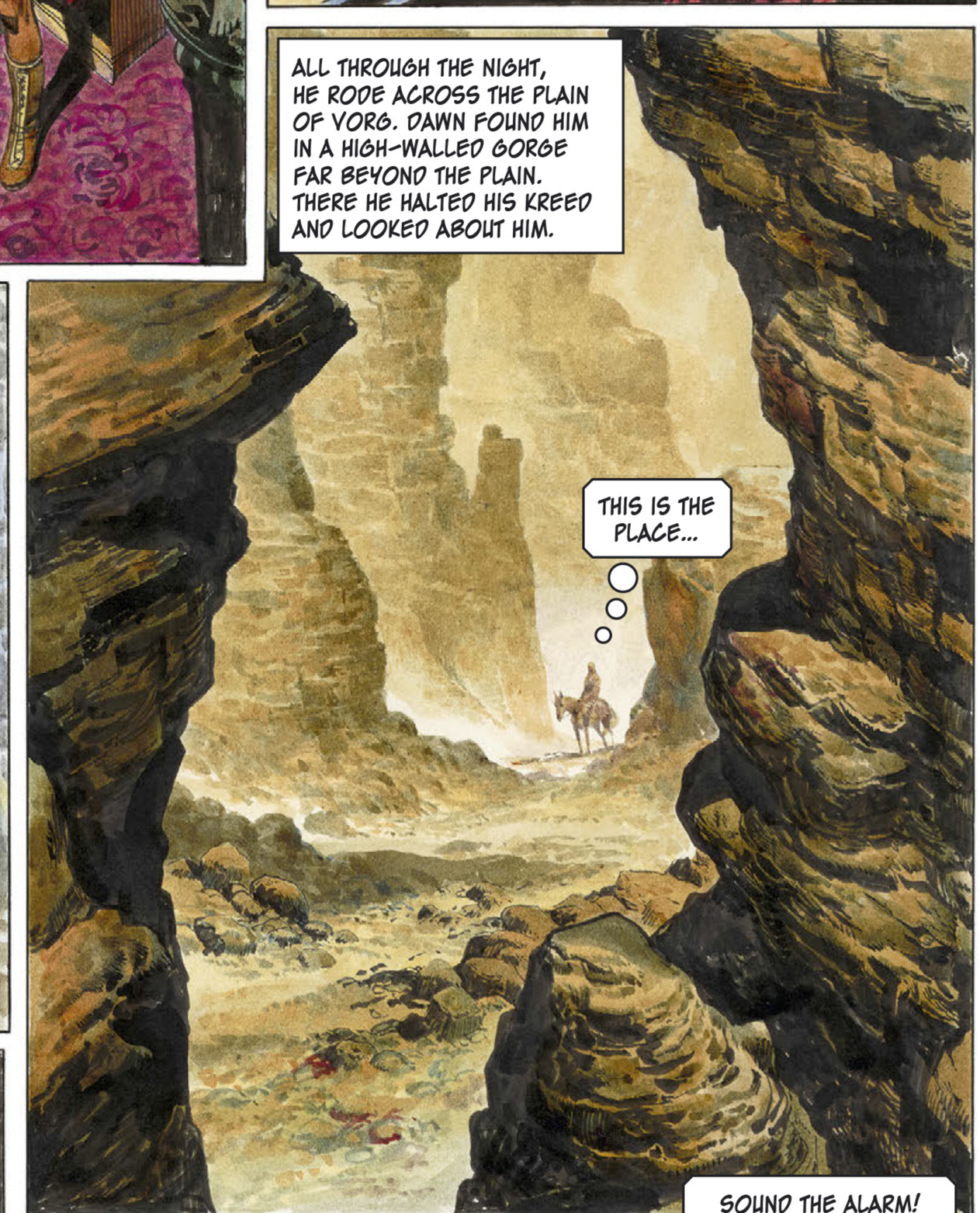

TRIGAN AIR PATROLS SEARCHED FOR THE MYSTERY CRAFT IN VAIN. A FEW DAYS LATER THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS WORKING ON MATTERS OF STATE...
AND THEN HE SAW...
STRANGE... WHO COULD HAVE PUSHED THAT UNDER MY DOOR?
AAAAAH! I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF PAPER WORK FOR TODAY...

THERE WAS A MESSAGE WRITTEN ON THE PIECE OF PAPER... A MESSAGE THAT BROUGHT A STRANGLED GASP TO TRIGO'S LIPS!
BY ALL THE STARS... WHAT DEMON'S WORK IS THIS?

THE EMPEROR'S NEXT ACTIONS WERE STRANGE. FIRST, HE BURNT THE MESSAGE...

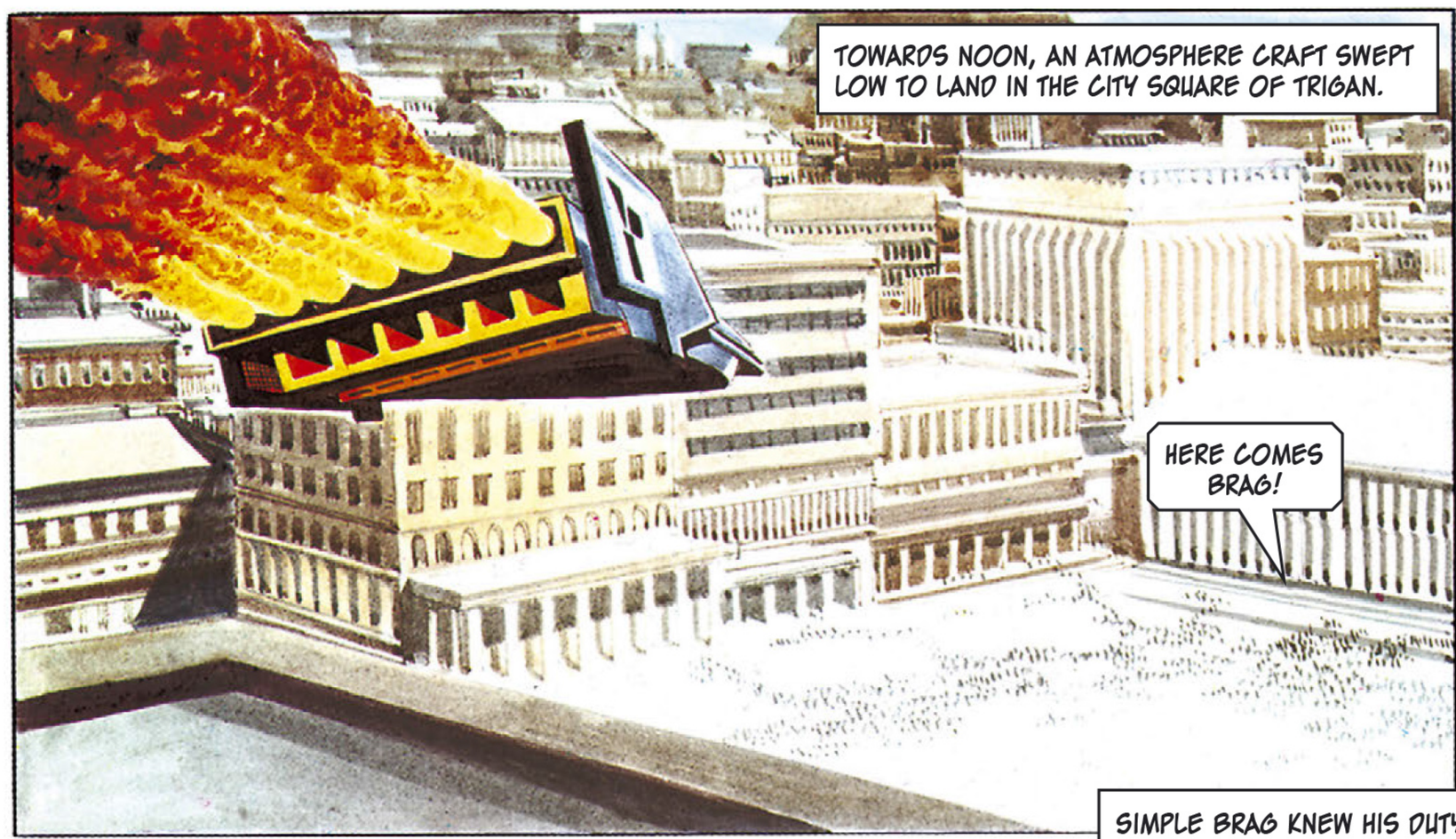

THEN, STRIPPING OFF HIS SPLENDID TRAPPINGS, HE DRESSED HIMSELF IN SIMPLE GARB AND A HOODED CLOAK...
I CAN EVADE THE GUARDS BY SLIPPING OUT OF THE BACK DOOR OF THE PALACE...

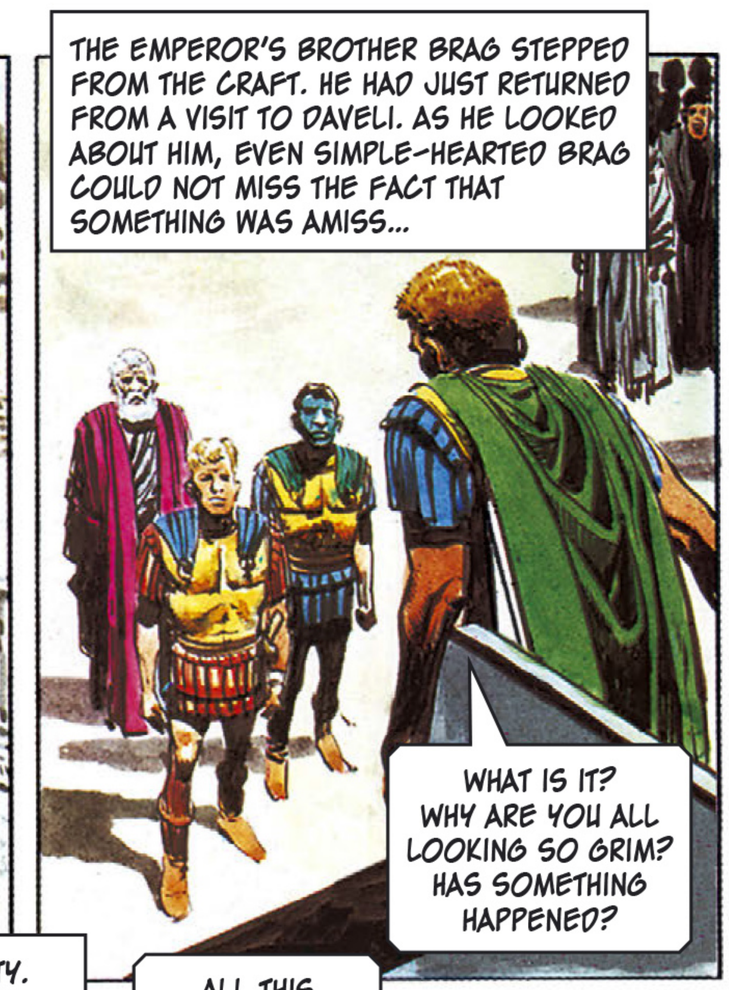
IT WAS NEARLY SUNSET WHEN TRIGO RODE, UNRECOGNISED, OUT OF HIS OWN CITY GATES ON A KREED.
ALL RIGHT, FELLOW, YOU CAN PASS THROUGH. BUT REMEMBER NEXT TIME... THE GATES CLOSE AT SUNSET!

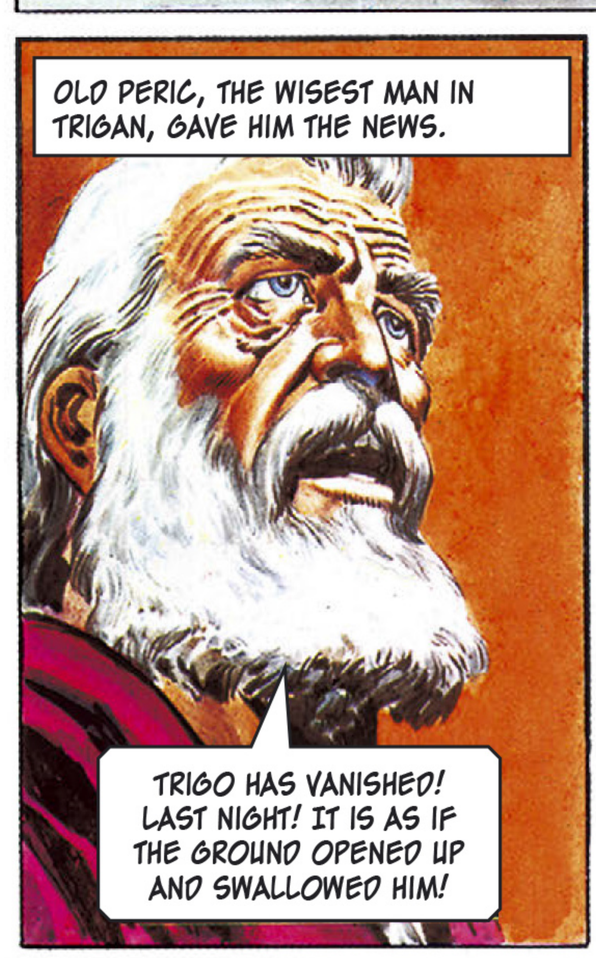

ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT, HE RODE ACROSS THE PLAIN OF VORG. DAWN FOUND HIM IN A HIGH-WALLED GORGE FAR BEYOND THE PLAIN. THERE HE HALTED HIS KREED AND LOOKED ABOUT HIM.
THIS IS THE PLACE...

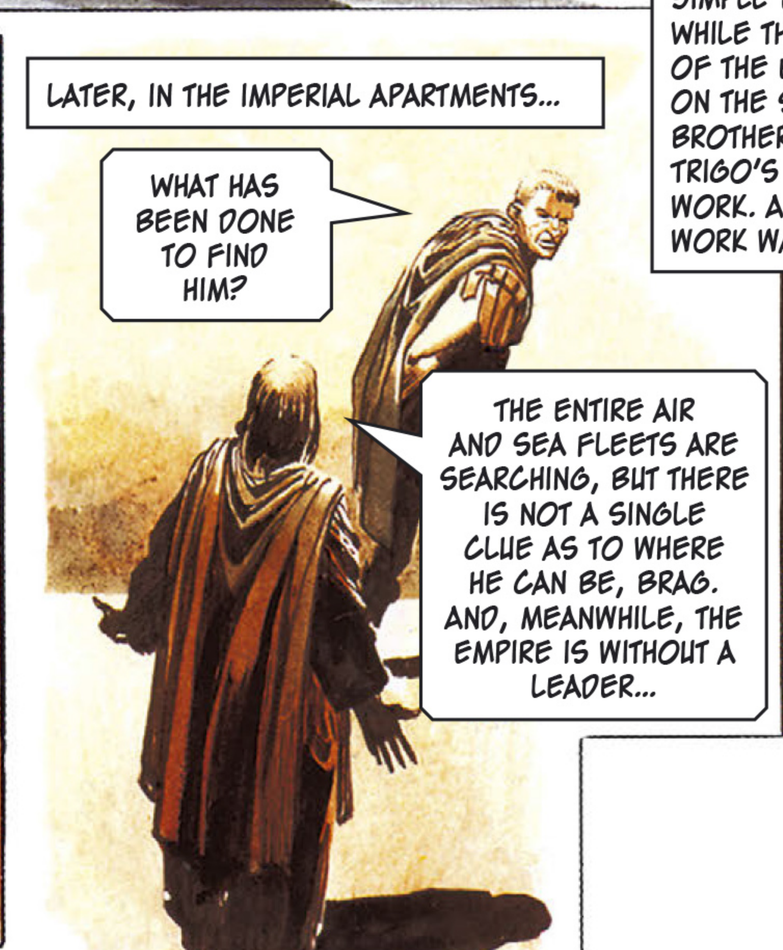
MENACING EYES WATCHED HIM FROM BEHIND BLACK MASKS...
I WILL SHOOT HIM DOWN!
NO, FOOL! YOU KNOW THE ORDERS... TRIGO IS TO BE TAKEN ALIVE!

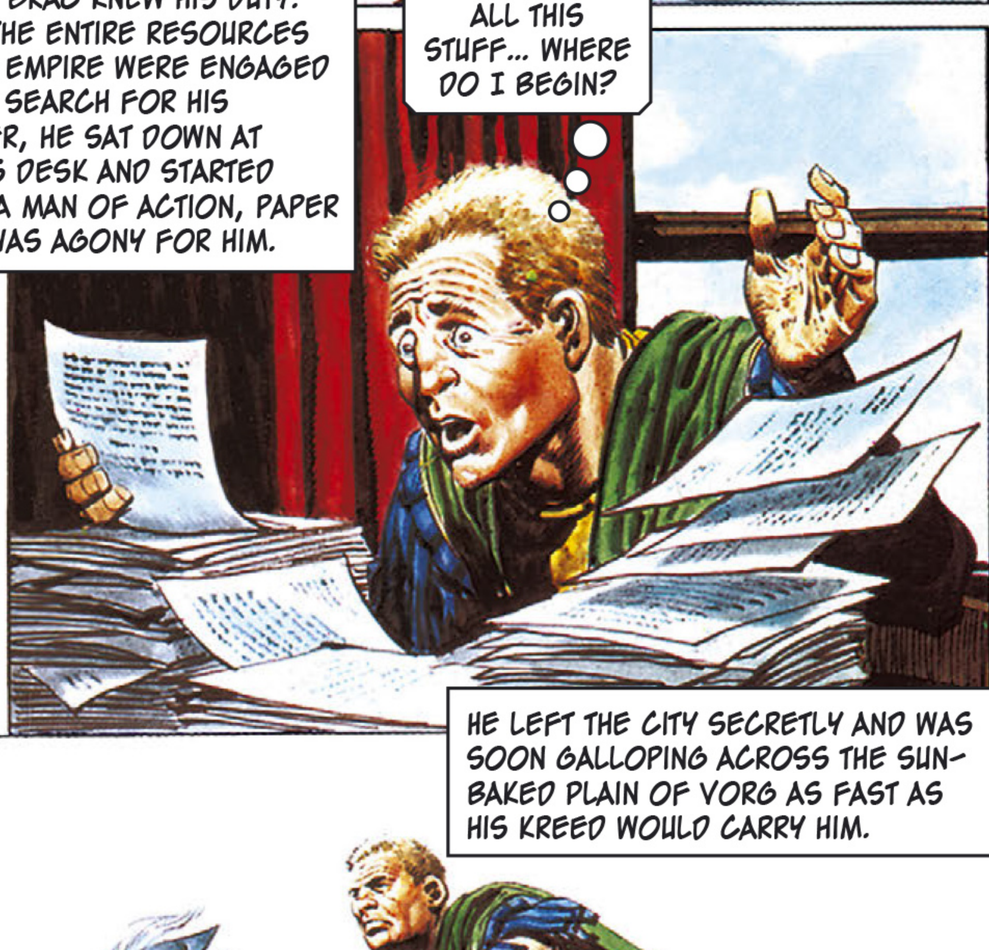
MEANWHILE, BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, THE IMPERIAL PALACE WAS IN A TURMOIL...
SOUND THE ALARM! CALL OUT THE CITY GUARDS! THE EMPEROR HAS DISAPPEARED!


TOWARDS NOON, AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT SWEPT LOW TO LAND IN THE CITY SQUARE OF TRIGAN.
HERE COMES BRAG!

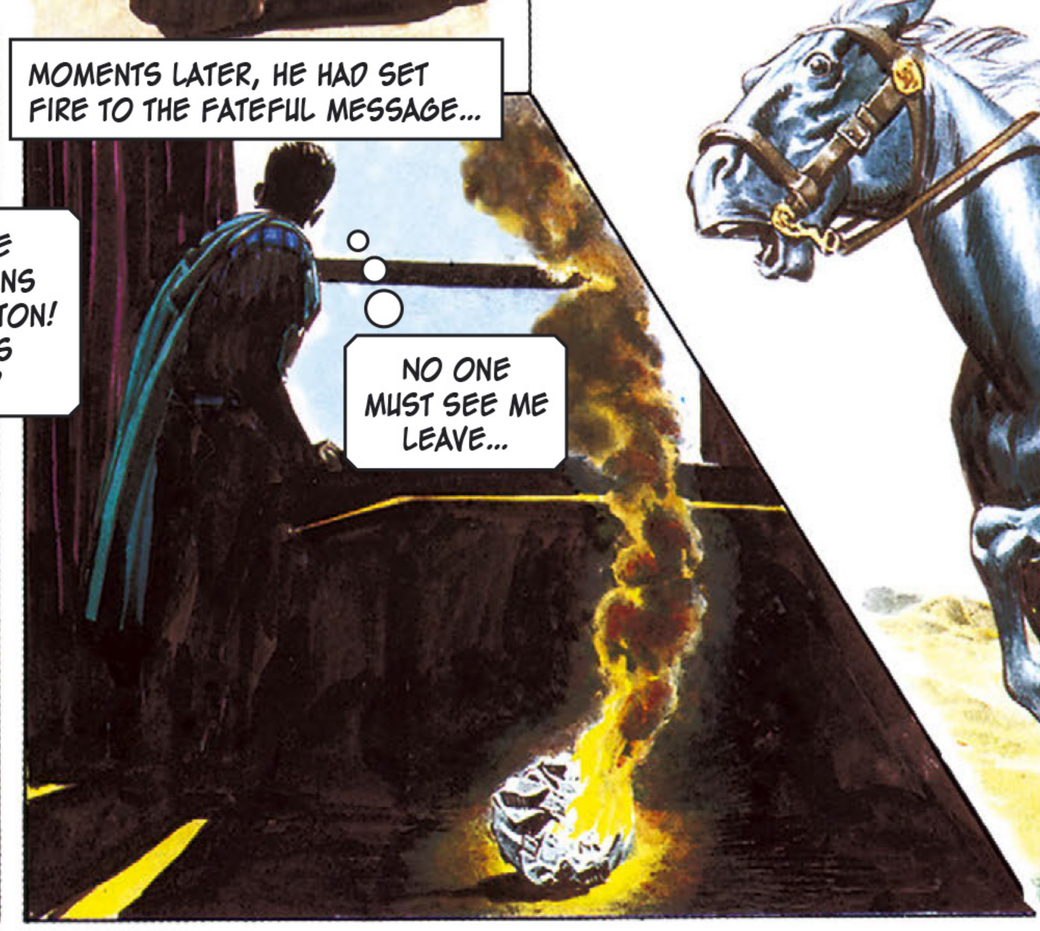

THE EMPEROR'S BROTHER BRAG STEPPED FROM THE CRAFT. HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A VISIT TO DAVELI. AS HE LOOKED ABOUT HIM, EVEN SIMPLE-HEARTED BRAG COULD NOT MISS THE FACT THAT SOMETHING WAS AMISS...
WHAT IS IT? WHY ARE YOU ALL LOOKING SO GRIM? HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED?


OLD PERIC, THE WISEST MAN IN TRIGAN, GAVE HIM THE NEWS.
TRIGO HAS VANISHED! LAST NIGHT! IT IS AS IF THE GROUND OPENED UP AND SWALLOWED HIM!


LATER, IN THE IMPERIAL APARTMENTS...
WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO FIND HIM?
THE ENTIRE AIR AND SEA FLEETS ARE SEARCHING, BUT THERE IS NOT A SINGLE CLUE AS TO WHERE HE CAN BE, BRAG. AND, MEANWHILE, THE EMPIRE IS WITHOUT A LEADER...

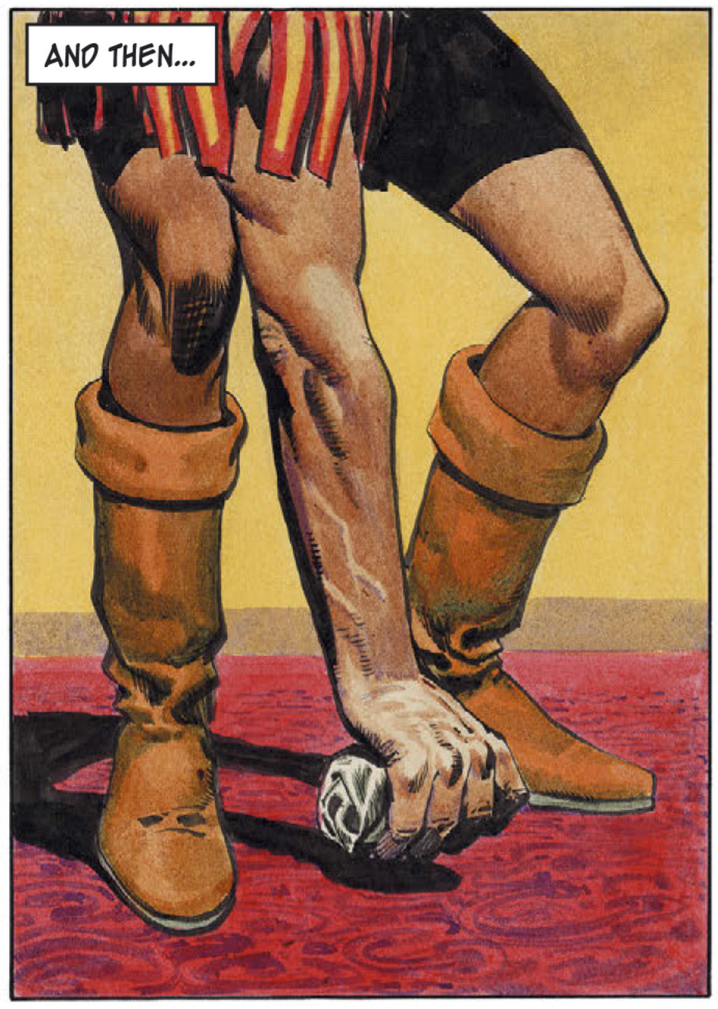

SIMPLE BRAG KNEW HIS DUTY. WHILE THE ENTIRE RESOURCES OF THE EMPIRE WERE ENGAGED ON THE SEARCH FOR HIS BROTHER, HE SAT DOWN AT TRIGO'S DESK AND STARTED WORK. A MAN OF ACTION, PAPER WORK WAS AGONY FOR HIM.
ALL THIS STUFF... WHERE DO I BEGIN?

AND THEN... HE CAME UPON A PIECE OF PAPER THAT BROUGHT HIM TO HIS FEET WITH A STARTLED CRY.
BY THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON! WHAT'S THIS?


MOMENTS LATER, HE HAD SET FIRE TO THE FATEFUL MESSAGE...
NO ONE MUST SEE ME LEAVE...

HE LEFT THE CITY SECRETLY AND WAS SOON GALLOPING ACROSS THE SUN-BAKED PLAIN OF VORG AS FAST AS HIS KREED WOULD CARRY HIM.

LATER THAT DAY, BRAG'S SON JANNO ENTERED THE IMPERIAL APARTMENTS WITH HIS COMRADE KEREN.
FATHER! WHERE IS HE?


AND THEN...

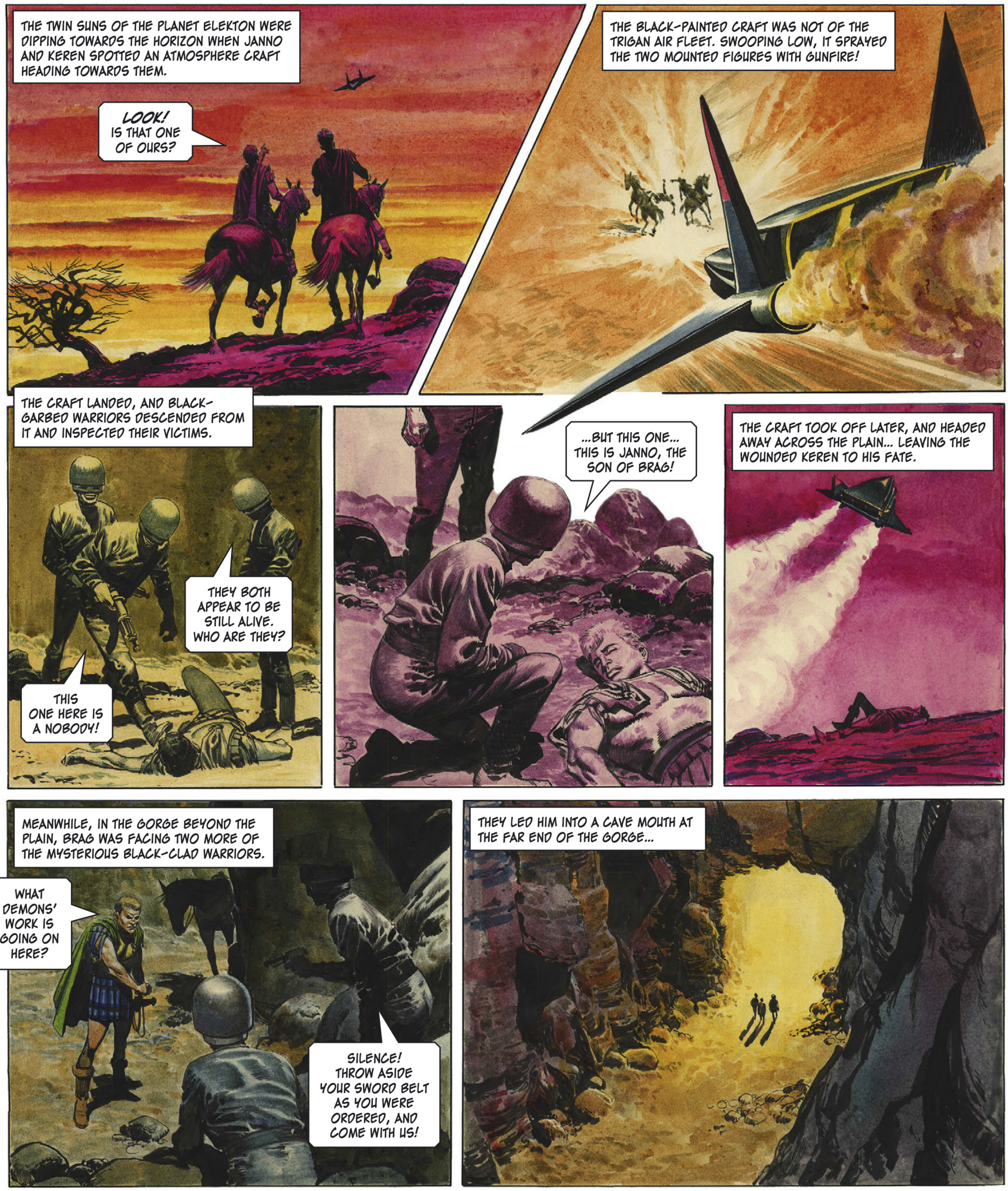
IT WAS THE FATEFUL MESSAGE WHICH HAD SENT BRAG ON HIS STRANGE JOURNEY. JANNO READ IT ALOUD.
WHY, IT'S A MESSAGE TO MY FATHER, WRITTEN IN UNCLE TRIGO'S OWN HAND. IT SAYS "BROTHER. THE EMPIRE IS IN MORTAL DANGER. SPEAK TO NO ONE. YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY TRAITORS. BURN THIS LETTER, AND MEET ME IN THE GORGE BEYOND THE PLAIN" ...AND THE REST IS BURNT.

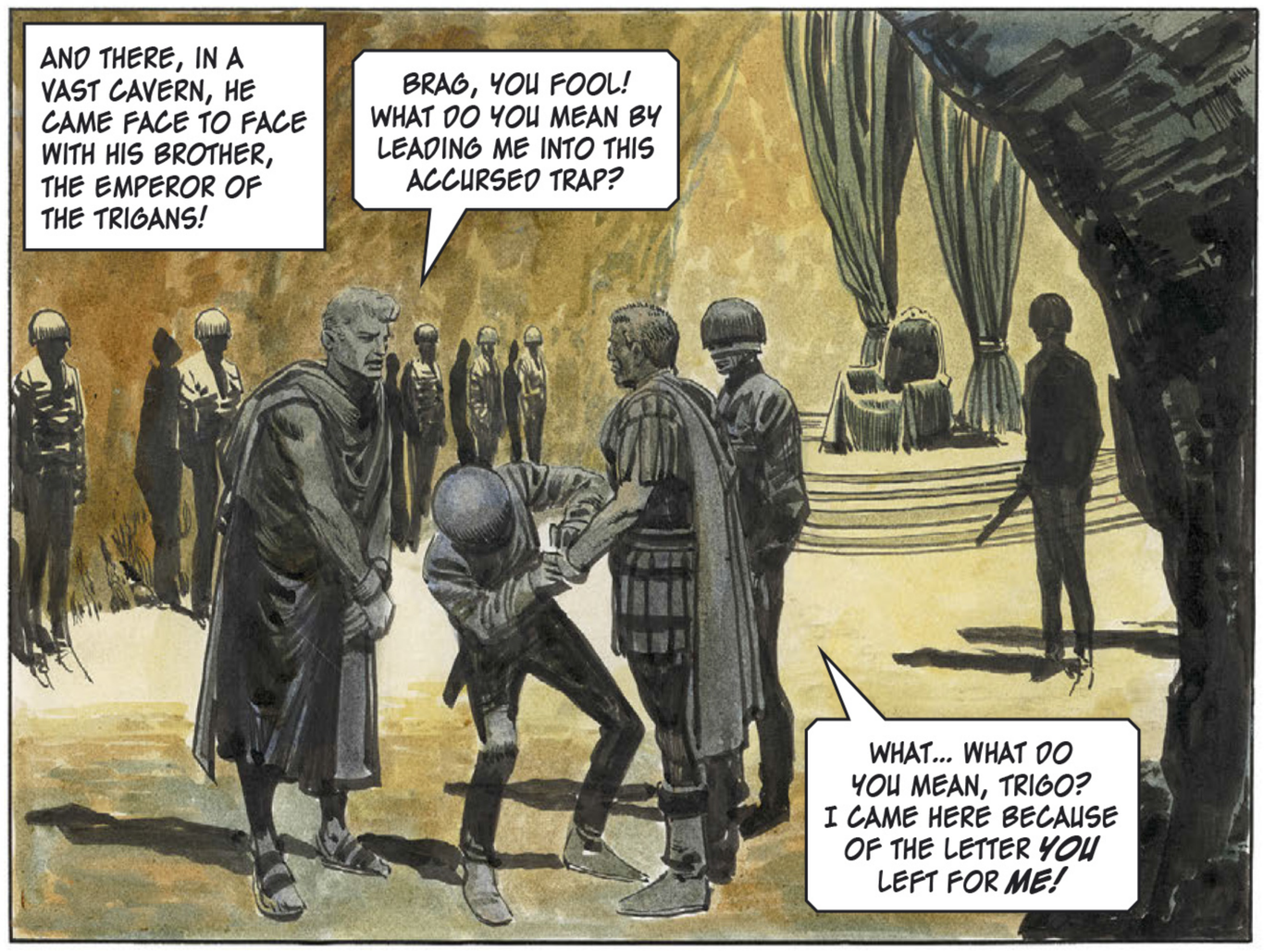
GRIMLY, THE COMRADES MET EACH OTHER'S GAZE.
WELL... WHAT DO WE DO?
SPEAK TO NO ONE... AND GO AFTER MY FATHER!

IT WAS NEARLY SUNSET WHEN BRAG REACHED THE HIGH-WALLED GORGE BEYOND THE PLAIN OF VORG AND CALLED OUT... HIS VOICE ECHOING AND RE-ECHOING...

TRIGO! TRIGOOOOOO!

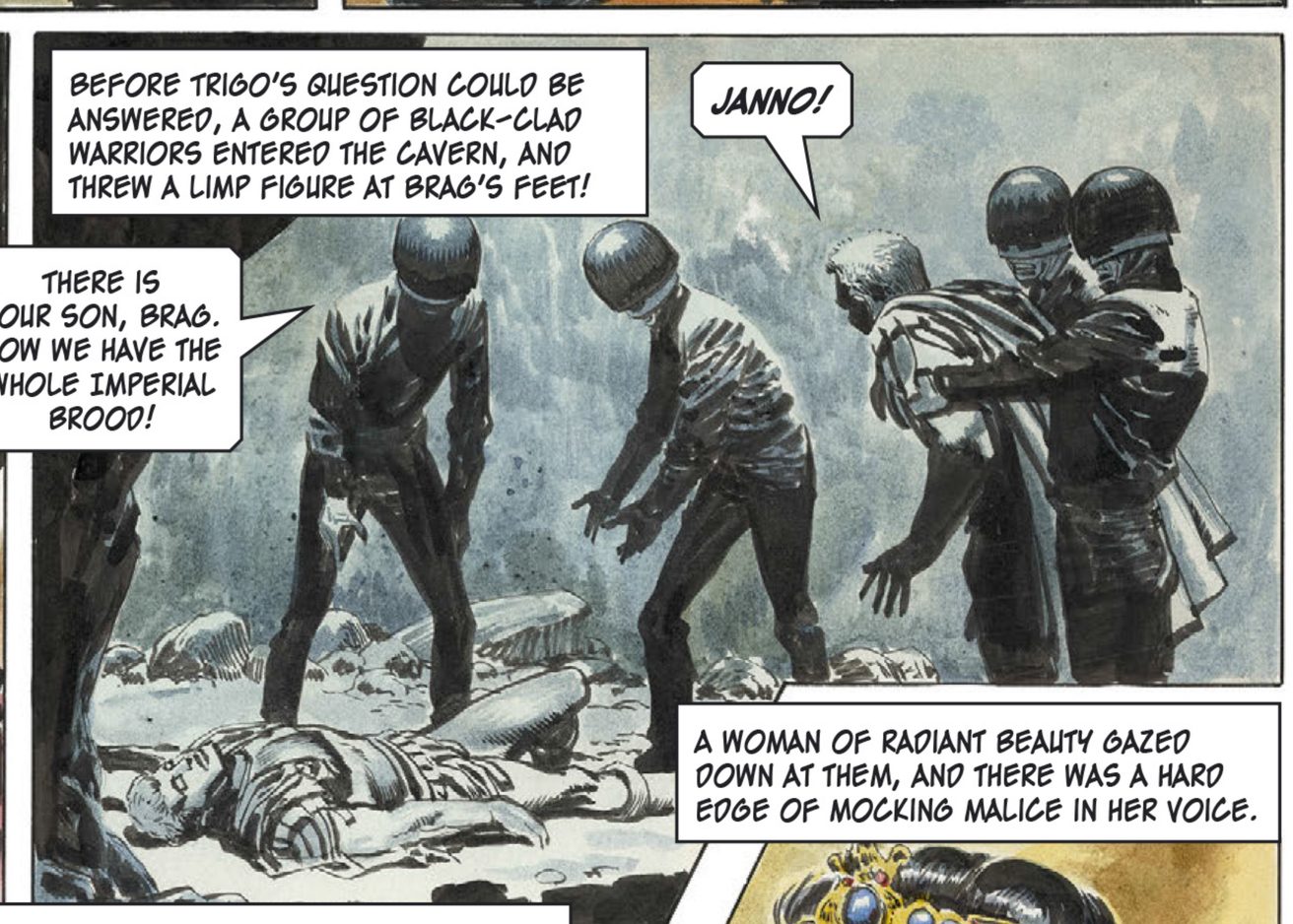
A HARSH VOICE MADE HIM SPIN ROUND, HIS HAND FLYING TO THE HILT OF HIS SWORD.
SO! HOW NEATLY THEY ALL RIDE INTO OUR TRAP!


THE TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WERE DIPPING TOWARDS THE HORIZON WHEN JANNO AND KEREN SPOTTED AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT HEADING TOWARDS THEM.
LOOK! IS THAT ONE OF OURS?
THE BLACK-PAINTED CRAFT WAS NOT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET. SWOOPING LOW, IT SPRAYED THE TWO MOUNTED FIGURES WITH GUNFIRE!
THE CRAFT LANDED, AND BLACK-GARBED WARRIORS DESCENDED FROM IT AND INSPECTED THEIR VICTIMS.
THEY BOTH APPEAR TO BE STILL ALIVE. WHO ARE THEY?
THIS ONE HERE IS A NOBODY!
...BUT THIS ONE... THIS IS JANNO, THE SON OF BRAG!
THE CRAFT TOOK OFF LATER, AND HEADED AWAY ACROSS THE PLAIN... LEAVING THE WOUNDED KEREN TO HIS FATE.
MEANWHILE, IN THE GORGE BEYOND THE PLAIN, BRAG WAS FACING TWO MORE OF THE MYSTERIOUS BLACK-CLAD WARRIORS.
WHAT DEMONS' WORK IS GOING ON HERE?
SILENCE! THROW ASIDE YOUR SWORD BELT AS YOU WERE ORDERED, AND COME WITH US!
THEY LED HIM INTO A CAVE MOUTH AT THE FAR END OF THE GORGE...

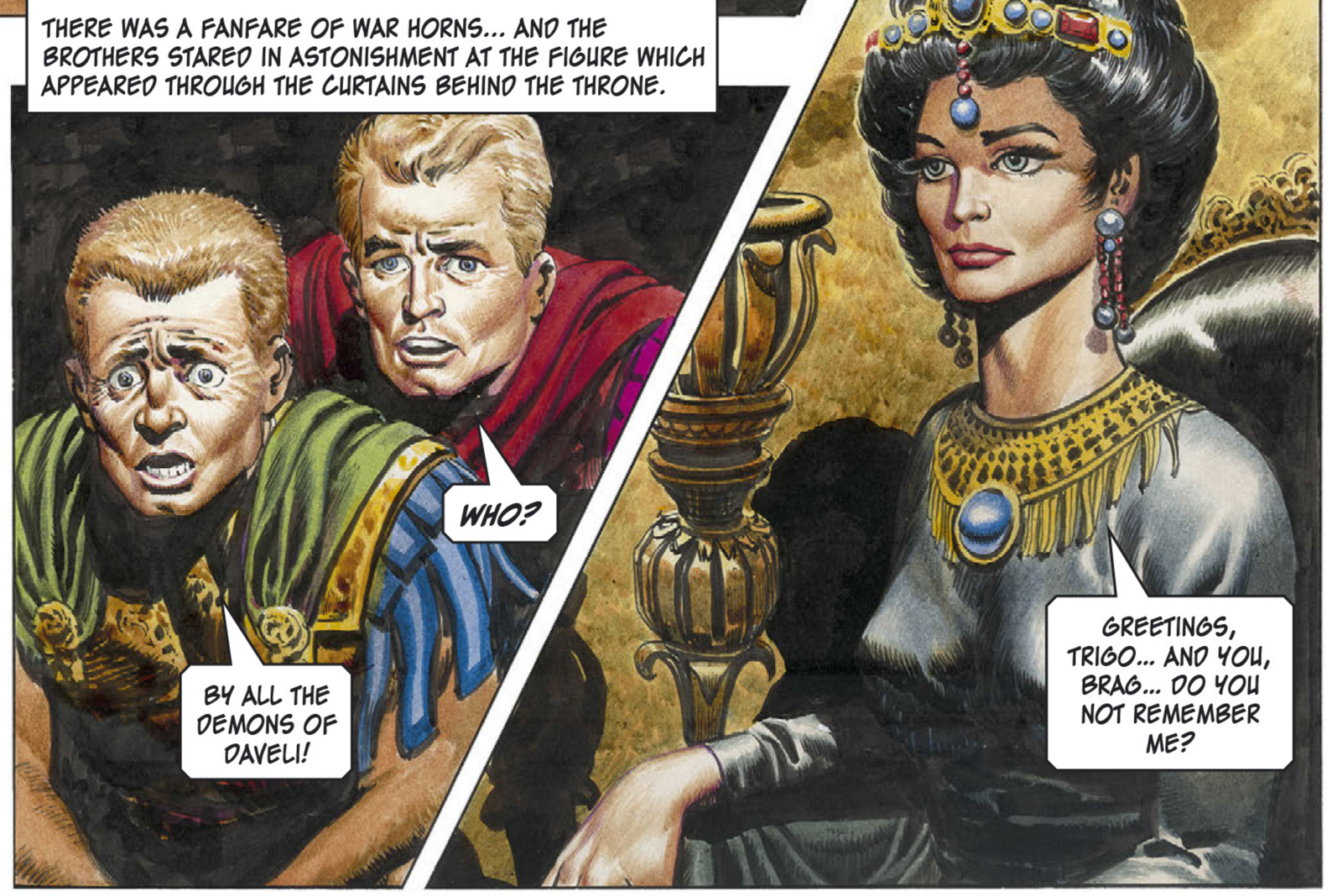

AND THERE, IN A VAST CAVERN, HE CAME FACE TO FACE WITH HIS BROTHER, THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS!
BRAG, YOU FOOL! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY LEADING ME INTO THIS ACCURSED TRAP?
WHAT... WHAT DO YOU MEAN, TRIGO? I CAME HERE BECAUSE OF THE LETTER YOU LEFT FOR ME!

ONE OF THE WARRIORS SNEERINGLY INDICATED A SLY-FACED MAN WHO STOOD NEARBY.
YOU BOTH RECEIVED LETTERS WHICH YOU BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY THE OTHER. PERMIT ME TO INTRODUCE THE MAN WHO REALLY WROTE THE LETTERS...
TASSIG IS THE NAME, SIRS. THOUGH I SAY IT MYSELF, THE FINEST FORGER ON ELEKTON!

THEN ALL WAS CLEAR TO THE BROTHERS.
TASSIG, THE CRIMINAL... WHO WAS MYSTERIOUSLY RESCUED A FEW DAYS AGO!
YOU USED HIS EVIL SKILL TO LURE US HERE! BUT WHY? ...WHY?

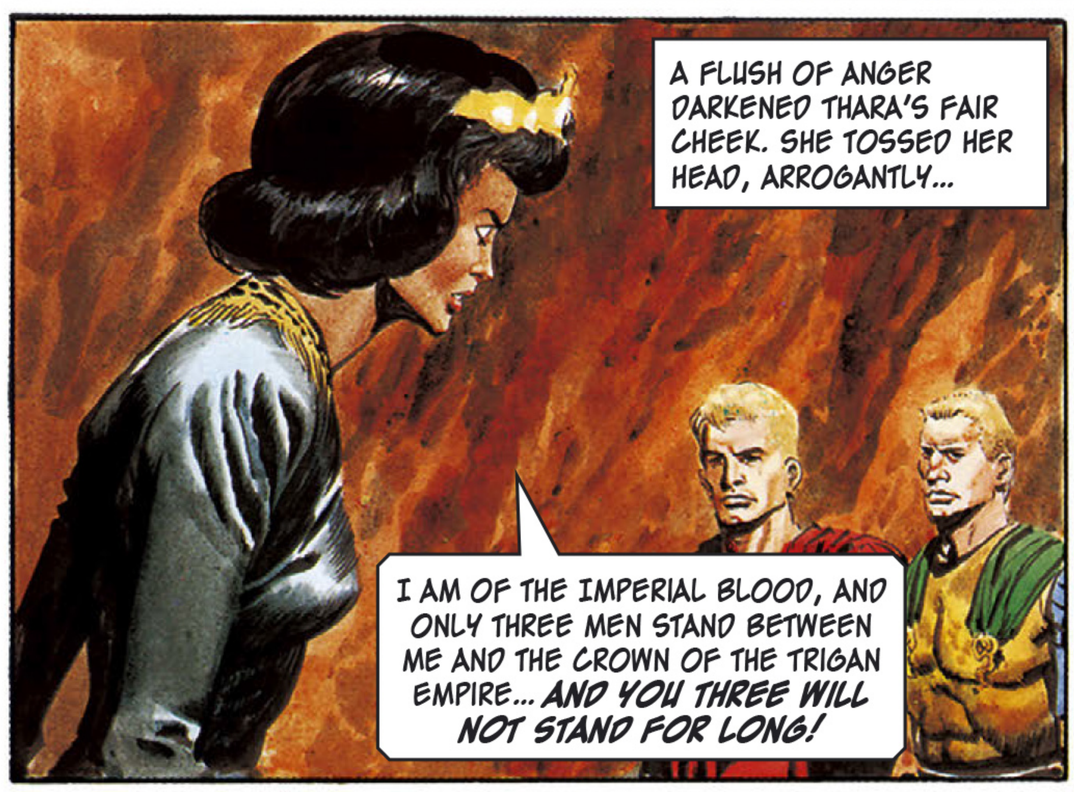

BEFORE TRIGO'S QUESTION COULD BE ANSWERED, A GROUP OF BLACK-CLAD WARRIORS ENTERED THE CAVERN, AND THREW A LIMP FIGURE AT BRAG'S FEET!
JANNO!
THERE IS YOUR SON, BRAG. NOW WE HAVE THE WHOLE IMPERIAL BROOD!

AND THEN...
SOUND THE GONG TO INFORM HER HIGHNESS THAT ALL IS READY!
HER HIGHNESS? WHAT HIGHNESS?


THERE WAS A FANFARE OF WAR HORNS... AND THE BROTHERS STARED IN ASTONISHMENT AT THE FIGURE WHICH APPEARED THROUGH THE CURTAINS BEHIND THE THRONE.
WHO?
BY ALL THE DEMONS OF DAVELI!
A WOMAN OF RADIANT BEAUTY GAZED DOWN AT THEM, AND THERE WAS A HARD EDGE OF MOCKING MALICE IN HER VOICE.
GREETINGS, TRIGO... AND YOU, BRAG... DO YOU NOT REMEMBER ME?

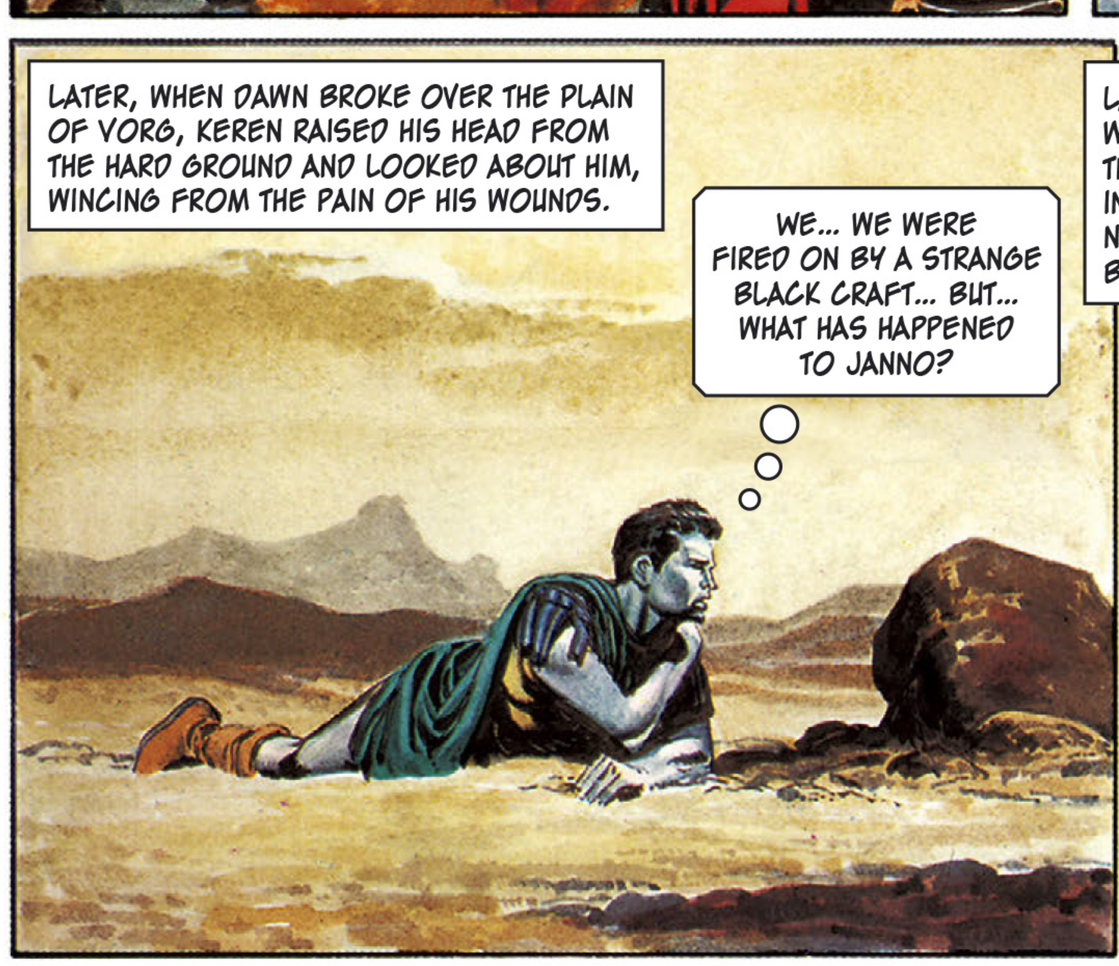
TRIGO AND BRAG STARED IN PUZZLEMENT AT THE WOMAN... AND THEN SHE SPOKE AGAIN...
I AM NOT SURPRISED THAT YOU DO NOT REMEMBER ME. IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME. I AM YOUR NIECE THARA!
THARA!

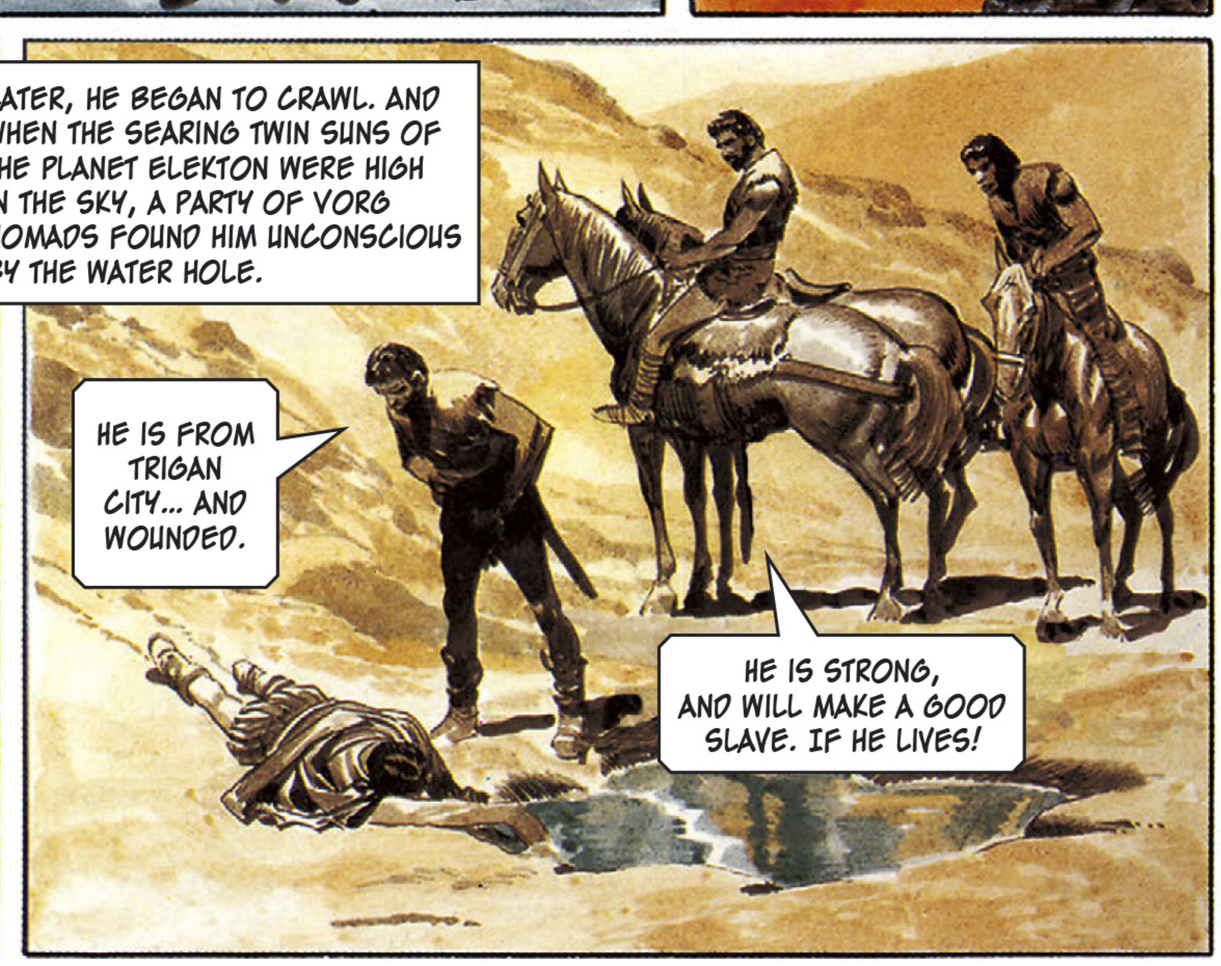
YES... I REMEMBER YOU AS A CHILD... VERY WELL!
A SELF-WILLED LITTLE MONSTER WHO SCREAMED EVERY TIME SHE DIDN'T GET HER OWN WAY!

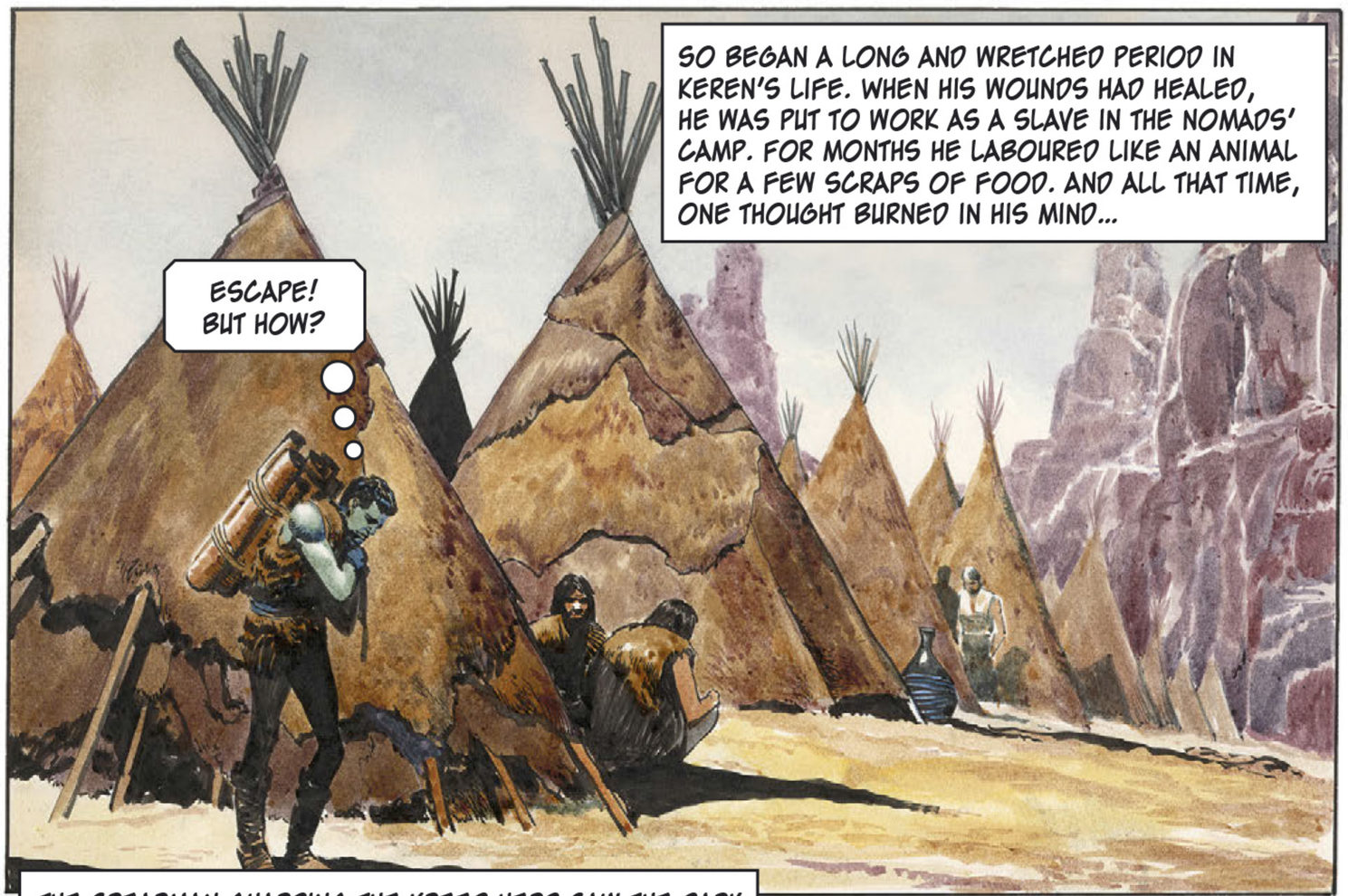

A FLUSH OF ANGER DARKENED THARA'S FAIR CHEEK. SHE TOSSED HER HEAD, ARROGANTLY...
I AM OF THE IMPERIAL BLOOD, AND ONLY THREE MEN STAND BETWEEN ME AND THE CROWN OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE... AND YOU THREE WILL NOT STAND FOR LONG!

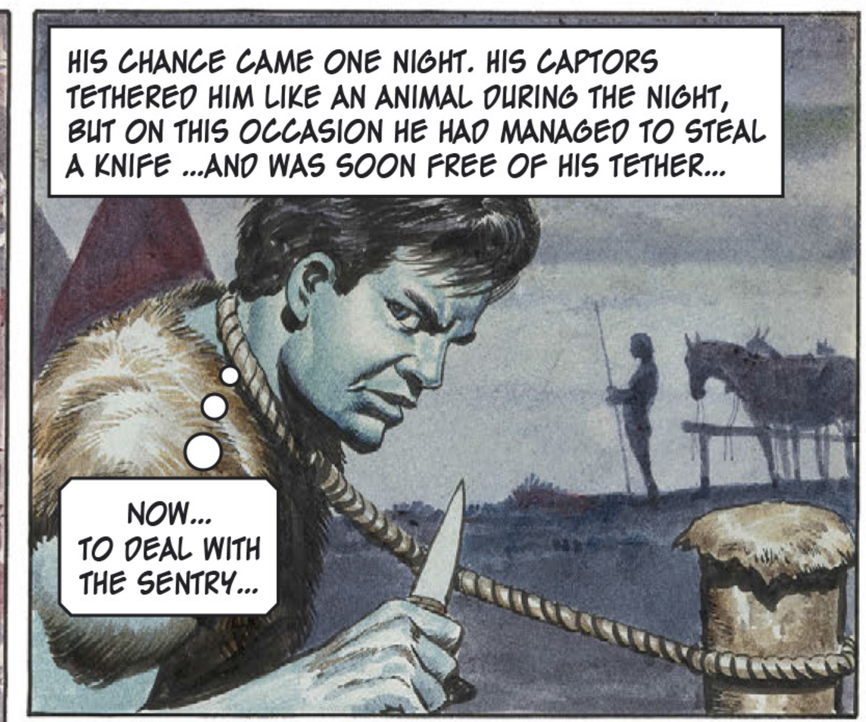
YOU WOULDN'T DARE...
IT IS ALREADY AS GOOD AS DONE!

THARA CALLED TO HER BLACK GUARDS.
TAKE THEM AWAY... AND ELIMINATE THEM!

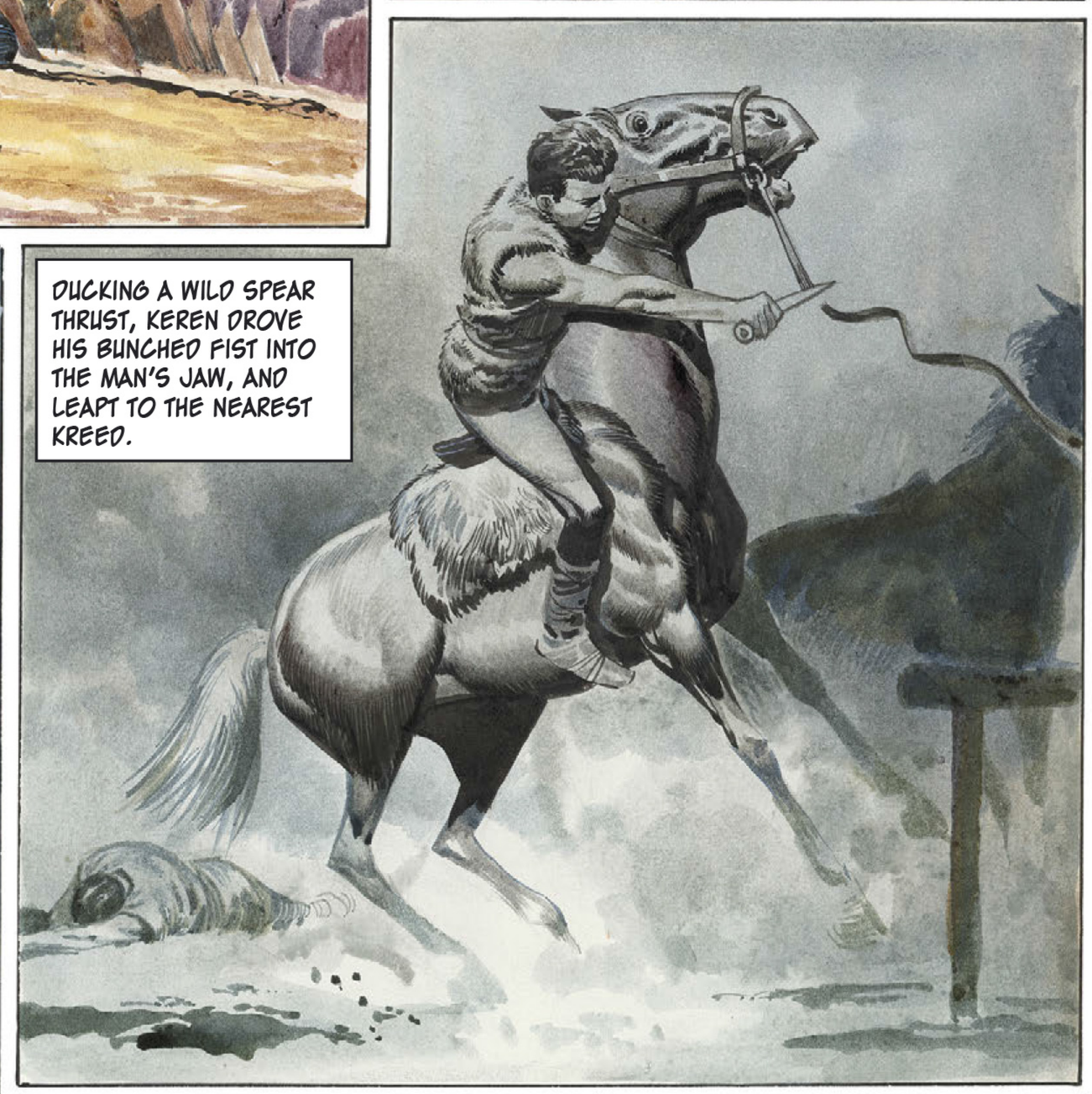

LATER, WHEN DAWN BROKE OVER THE PLAIN OF VORG, KEREN RAISED HIS HEAD FROM THE HARD GROUND AND LOOKED ABOUT HIM, WINCING FROM THE PAIN OF HIS WOUNDS.
WE... WE WERE FIRED ON BY A STRANGE BLACK CRAFT... BUT... WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO JANNO?

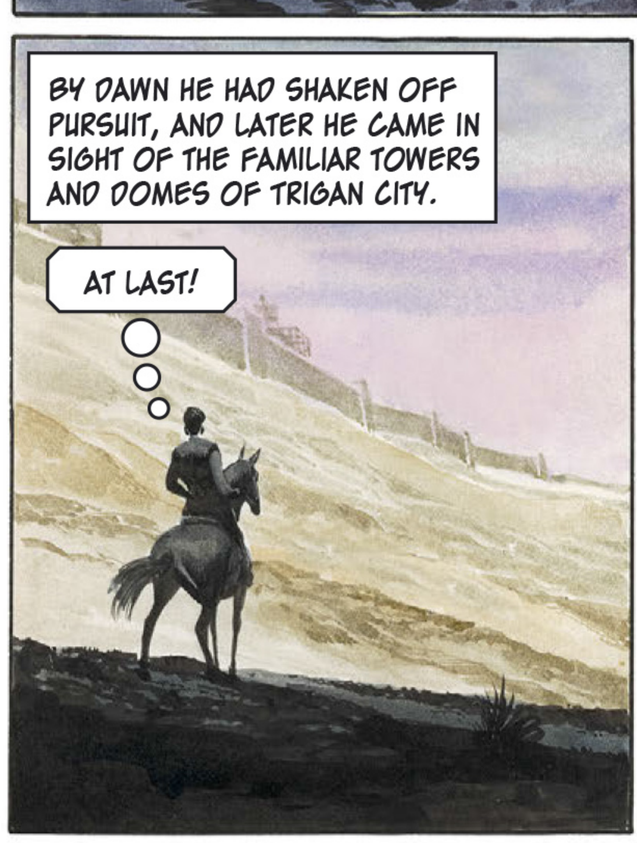

LATER, HE BEGAN TO CRAWL. AND WHEN THE SEARING TWIN SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WERE HIGH IN THE SKY, A PARTY OF VORG NOMADS FOUND HIM UNCONSCIOUS BY THE WATER HOLE.
HE IS FROM TRIGAN CITY... AND WOUNDED.
HE IS STRONG, AND WILL MAKE A GOOD SLAVE. IF HE LIVES!

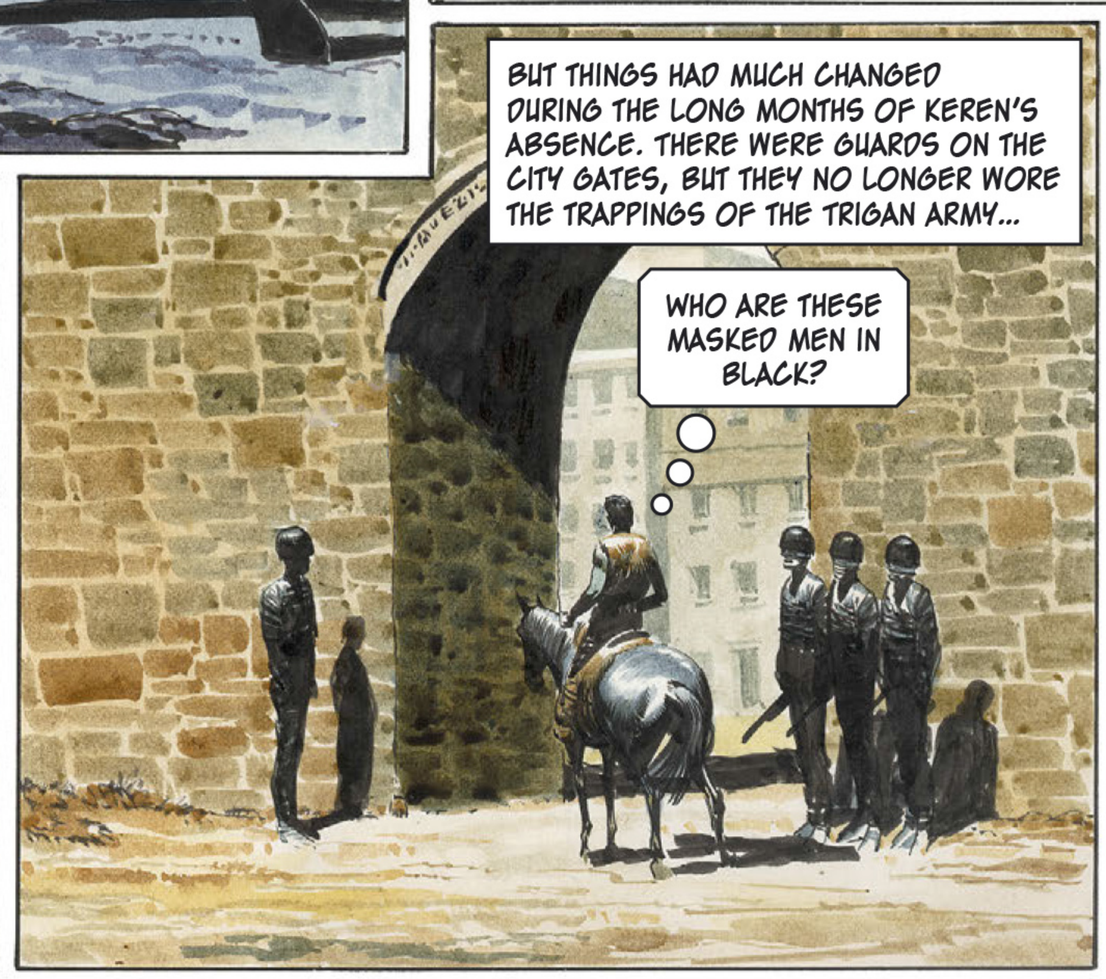

SO BEGAN A LONG AND WRETCHED PERIOD IN KEREN'S LIFE. WHEN HIS WOUNDS HAD HEALED, HE WAS PUT TO WORK AS A SLAVE IN THE NOMADS' CAMP. FOR MONTHS HE LABOURED LIKE AN ANIMAL FOR A FEW SCRAPS OF FOOD. AND ALL THAT TIME, ONE THOUGHT BURNED IN HIS MIND...
ESCAPE! BUT HOW?

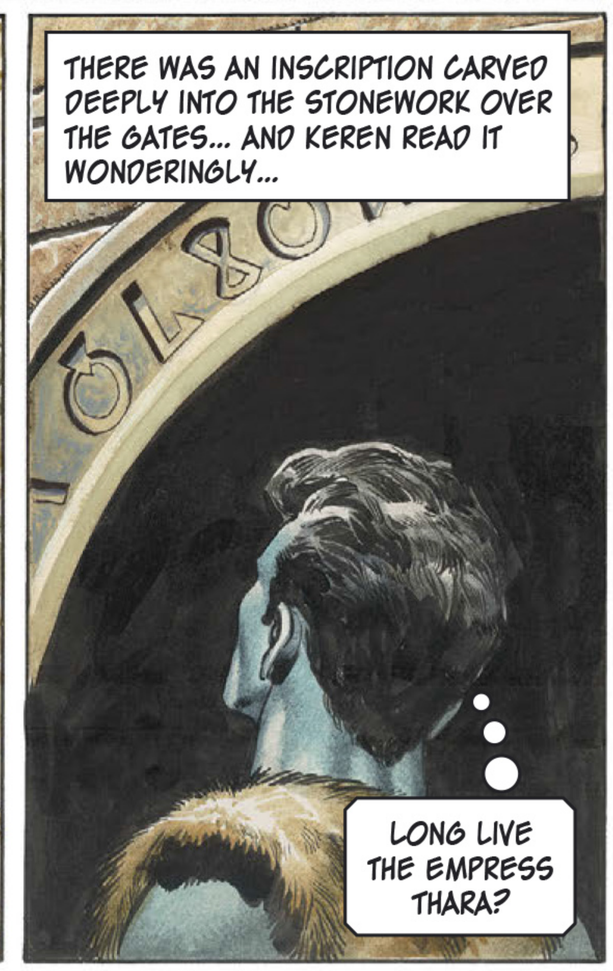

HIS CHANCE CAME ONE NIGHT. HIS CAPTORS TETHERED HIM LIKE AN ANIMAL DURING THE NIGHT, BUT ON THIS OCCASION HE HAD MANAGED TO STEAL A KNIFE ...AND WAS SOON FREE OF HIS TETHER...
NOW... TO DEAL WITH THE SENTRY...

THE SPEARMAN GUARDING THE KREED HERD SAW THE DARK FIGURE COMING AT HIM OUT OF THE GLOOM. HE YELLED THE ALARM AND BROUGHT HIS WEAPON TO THE READY.
THE SLAVE IS FREE!

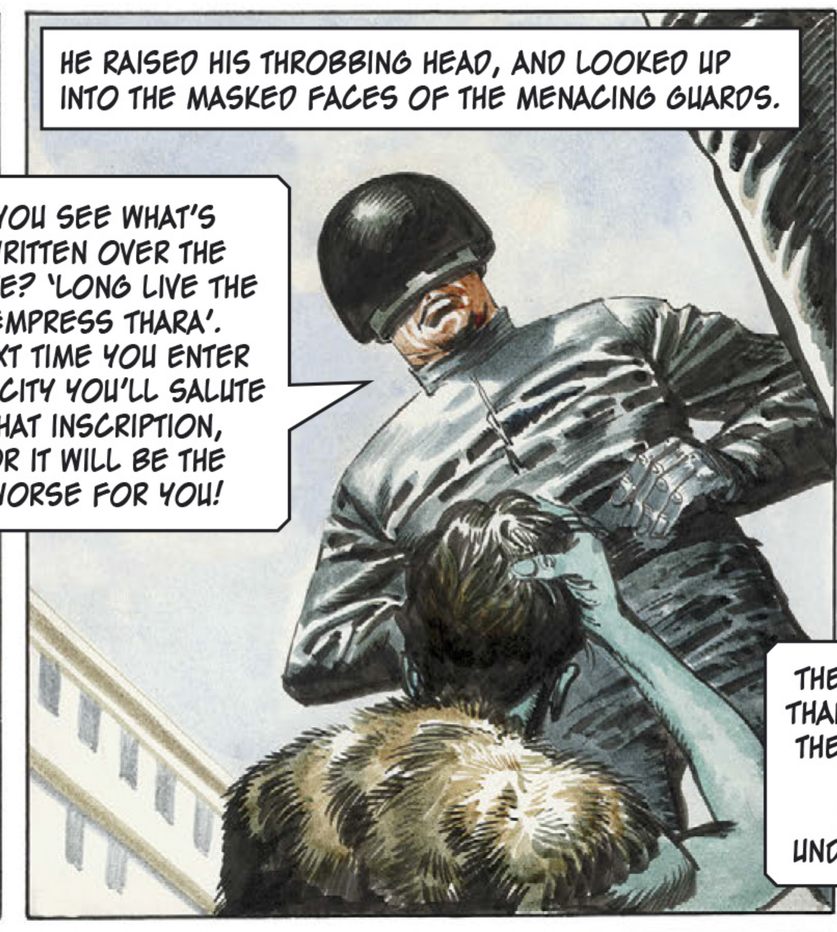

DUCKING A WILD SPEAR THRUST, KEREN DROVE HIS BUNCHED FIST INTO THE MAN'S JAW, AND LEAPT TO THE NEAREST KREED.

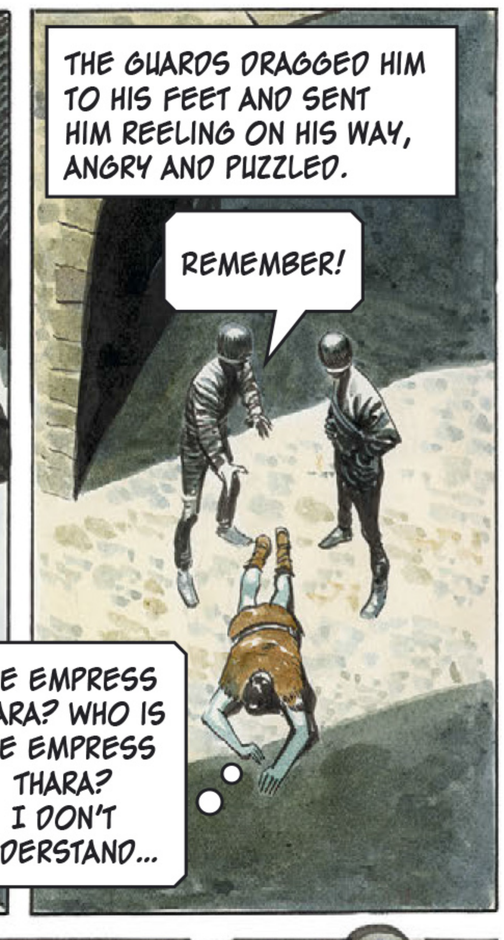

BY DAWN HE HAD SHAKEN OFF PURSUIT, AND LATER HE CAME IN SIGHT OF THE FAMILIAR TOWERS AND DOMES OF TRIGAN CITY.
AT LAST!

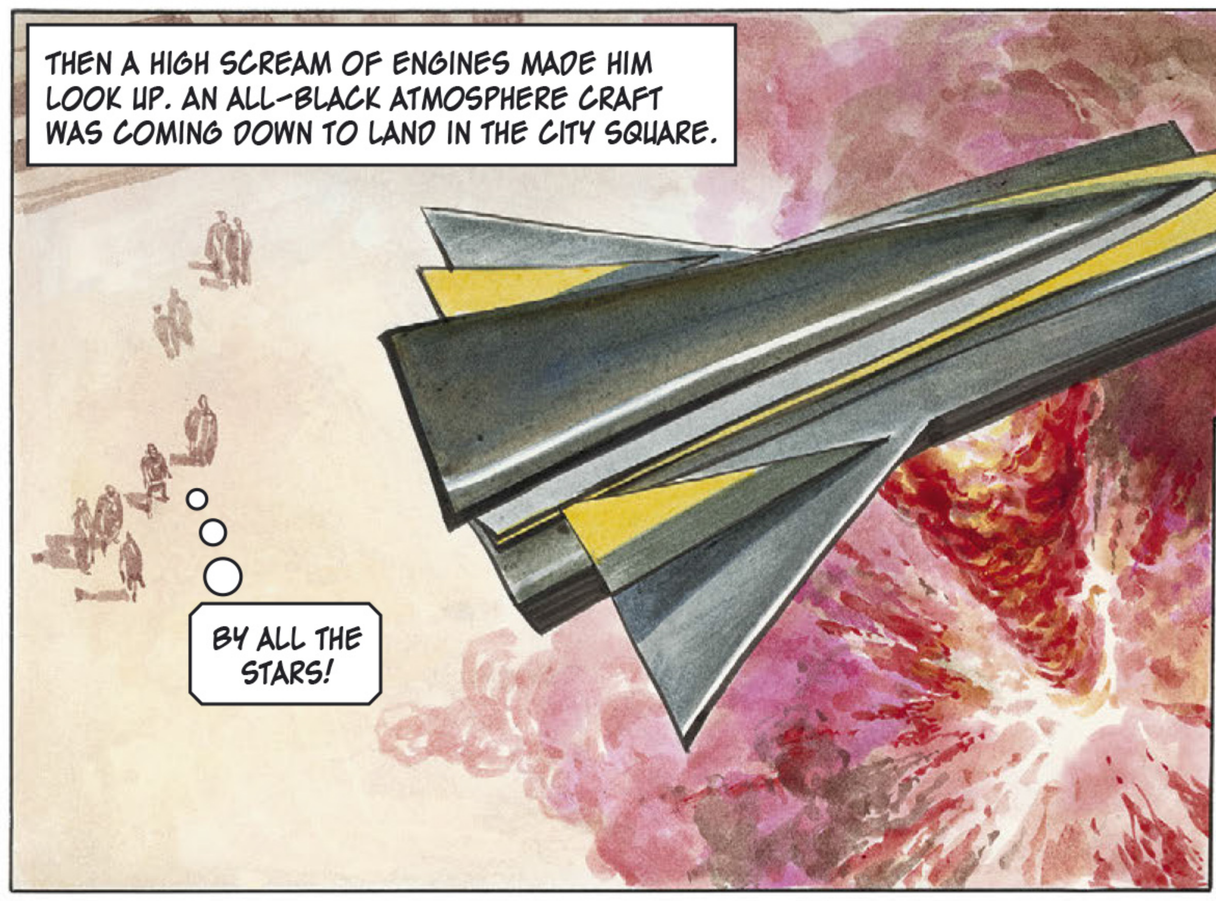

BUT THINGS HAD MUCH CHANGED DURING THE LONG MONTHS OF KEREN'S ABSENCE. THERE WERE GUARDS ON THE CITY GATES, BUT THEY NO LONGER WORE THE TRAPPINGS OF THE TRIGAN ARMY...
WHO ARE THESE MASKED MEN IN BLACK?

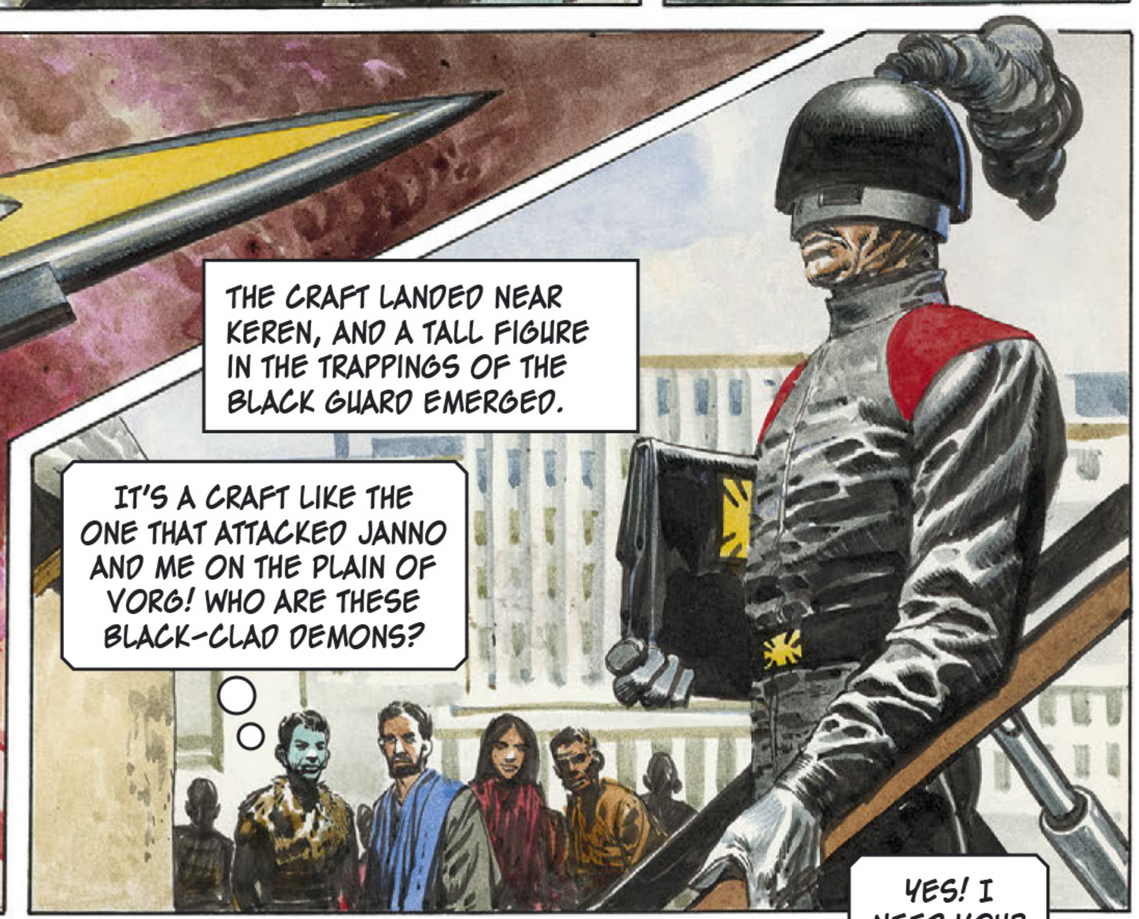

THERE WAS AN INSCRIPTION CARVED DEEPLY INTO THE STONEWORK OVER THE GATES... AND KEREN READ IT WONDERINGLY...
LONG LIVE THE EMPRESS THARA?

NEXT INSTANT, KEREN WAS SENT SPINNING TO THE GROUND BY A BLOW FROM A SPEAR SHAFT!
DISRESPECTFUL ANIMAL!
UUUUGH!


HE RAISED HIS THROBBING HEAD, AND LOOKED UP INTO THE MASKED FACES OF THE MENACING GUARDS.
YOU SEE WHAT'S WRITTEN OVER THE GATE? 'LONG LIVE THE EMPRESS THARA'. NEXT TIME YOU ENTER THE CITY YOU'LL SALUTE THAT INSCRIPTION, OR IT WILL BE THE WORSE FOR YOU!


THE GUARDS DRAGGED HIM TO HIS FEET AND SENT HIM REELING ON HIS WAY, ANGRY AND PUZZLED.
REMEMBER!
THE EMPRESS THARA? WHO IS THE EMPRESS THARA? I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

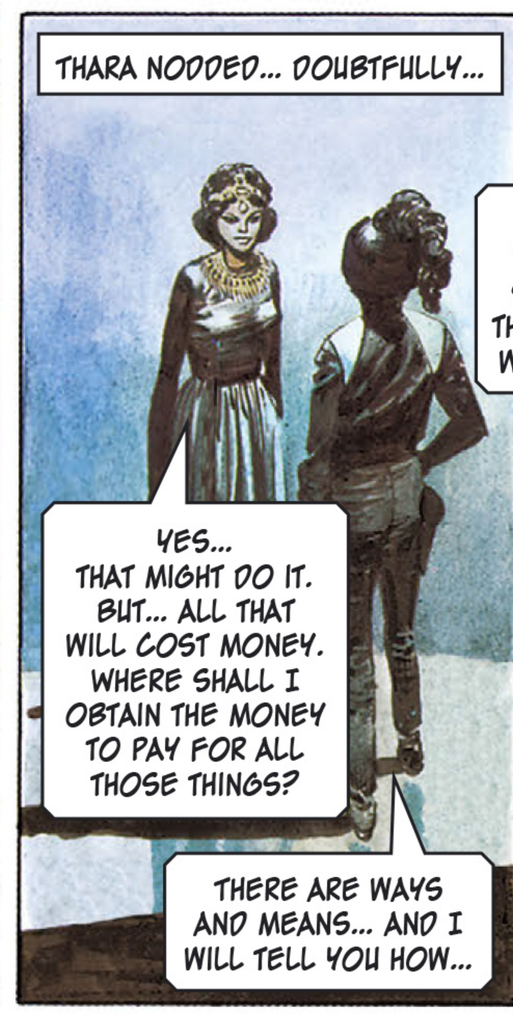

THEN A HIGH SCREAM OF ENGINES MADE HIM LOOK UP. AN ALL-BLACK ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WAS COMING DOWN TO LAND IN THE CITY SQUARE.
BY ALL THE STARS!


THE CRAFT LANDED NEAR KEREN, AND A TALL FIGURE IN THE TRAPPINGS OF THE BLACK GUARD EMERGED.
IT'S A CRAFT LIKE THE ONE THAT ATTACKED JANNO AND ME ON THE PLAIN OF VORG! WHO ARE THESE BLACK-CLAD DEMONS?

HE WATCHED THE NEWCOMER STRIDE TOWARDS THE GATES OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE AND RECEIVE THE SALUTES OF THE GUARDS.
CONDUCT ME TO THE EMPRESS!
YES, COMMANDER!

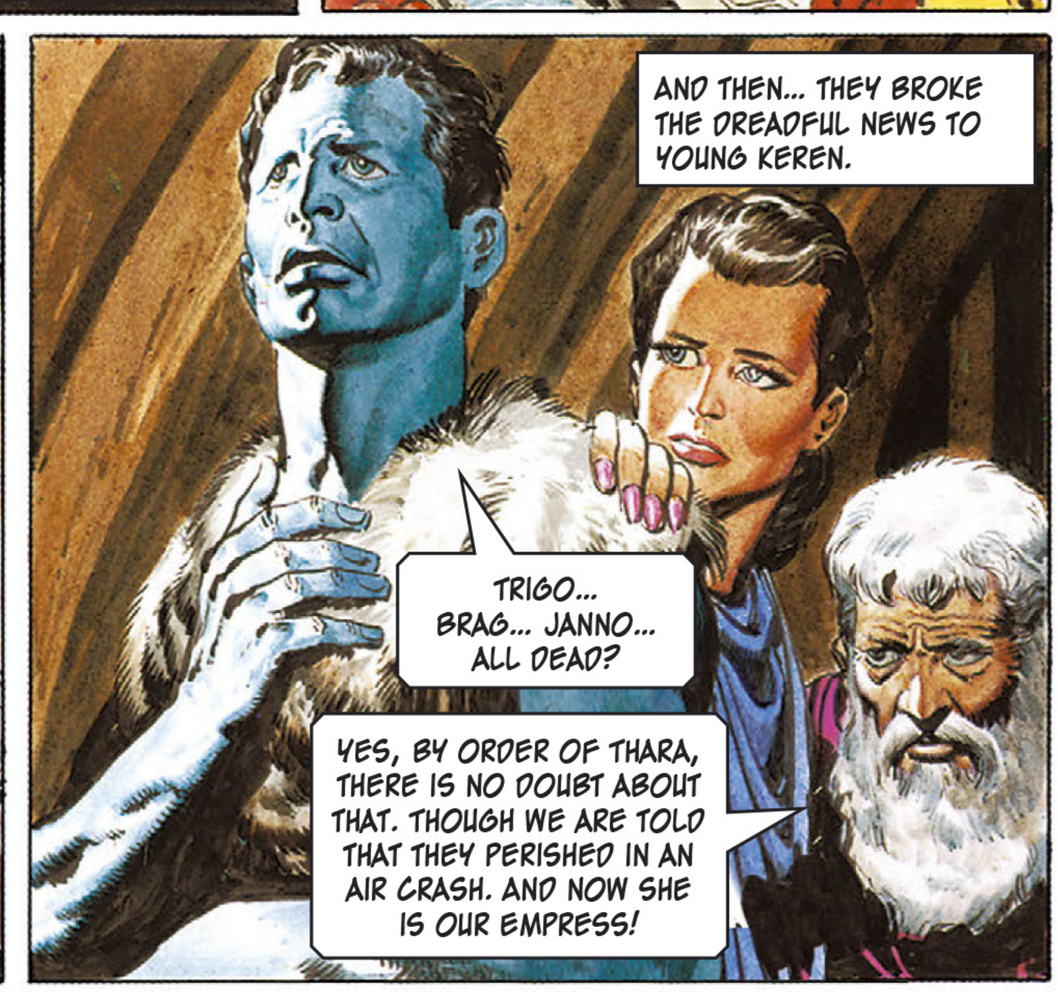
THARA, EMPRESS OF TRIGAN, WAS NERVOUSLY PACING THE COUNCIL CHAMBER... SHE TURNED WITH A LOOK OF RELIEF WHEN THE COMMANDER OF THE BLACK GUARD ENTERED.
YOU SENT FOR ME, IMPERIAL MAJESTY?
YES! I NEED YOUR ADVICE...

COMMANDER... THE PEOPLE HAVE ONLY HALF-ACCEPTED ME AS THEIR EMPRESS. WHAT CAN I DO TO WIN THEIR LOYALTY AND THEIR LOVE?
THE ANSWER IS QUITE SIMPLE, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. INDULGE THEM. DISTRIBUTE FREE FOOD AND PROVIDE THEM ALL WITH SLAVES.STAGE LAVISH GAMES EVERY DAY IN THE ARENA. YOU WILL SOON WIN THEIR LOVE!

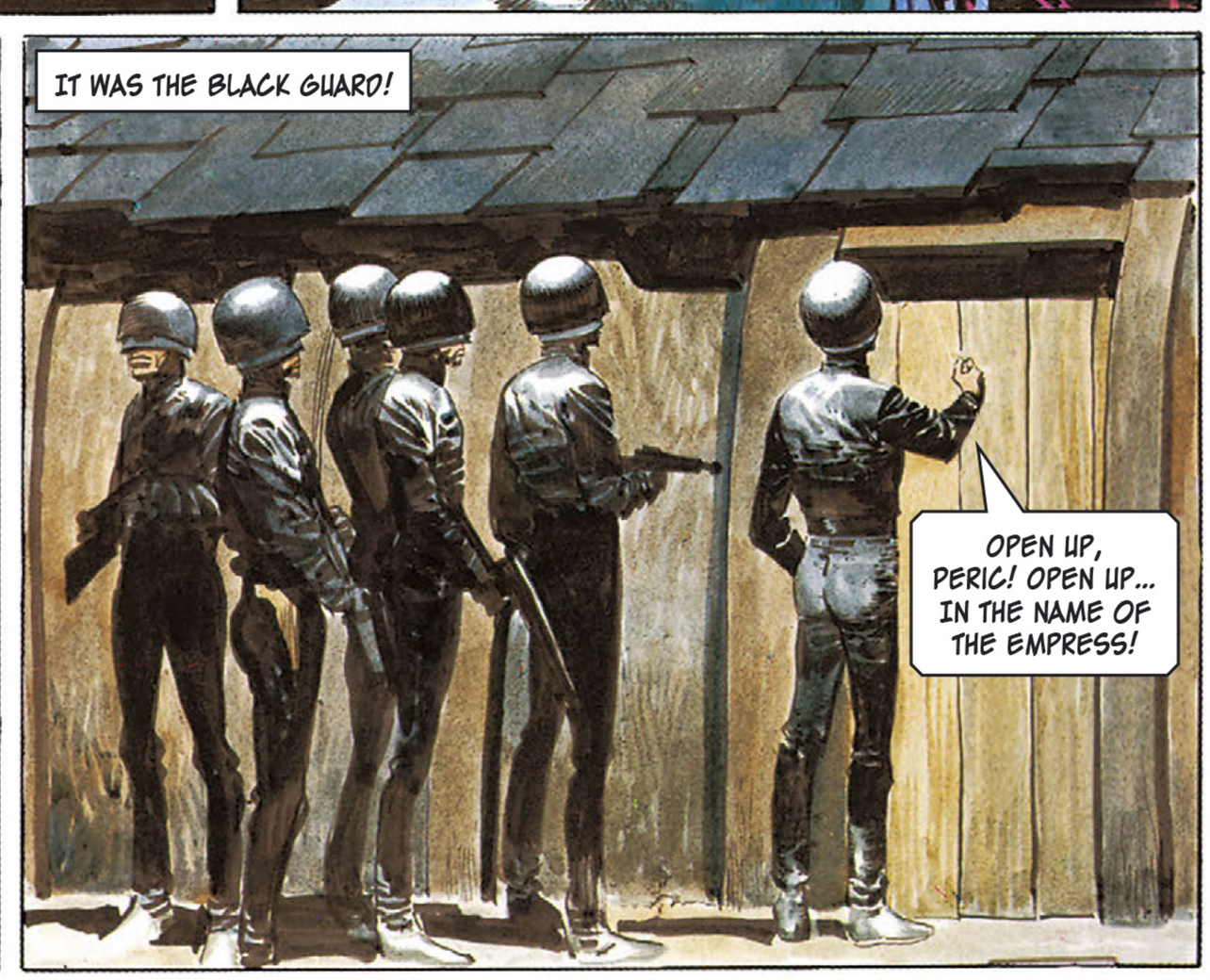

THARA NODDED... DOUBTFULLY...
YES... THAT MIGHT DO IT. BUT... ALL THAT WILL COST MONEY. WHERE SHALL I OBTAIN THE MONEY TO PAY FOR ALL THOSE THINGS?
THERE ARE WAYS AND MEANS... AND I WILL TELL YOU HOW...

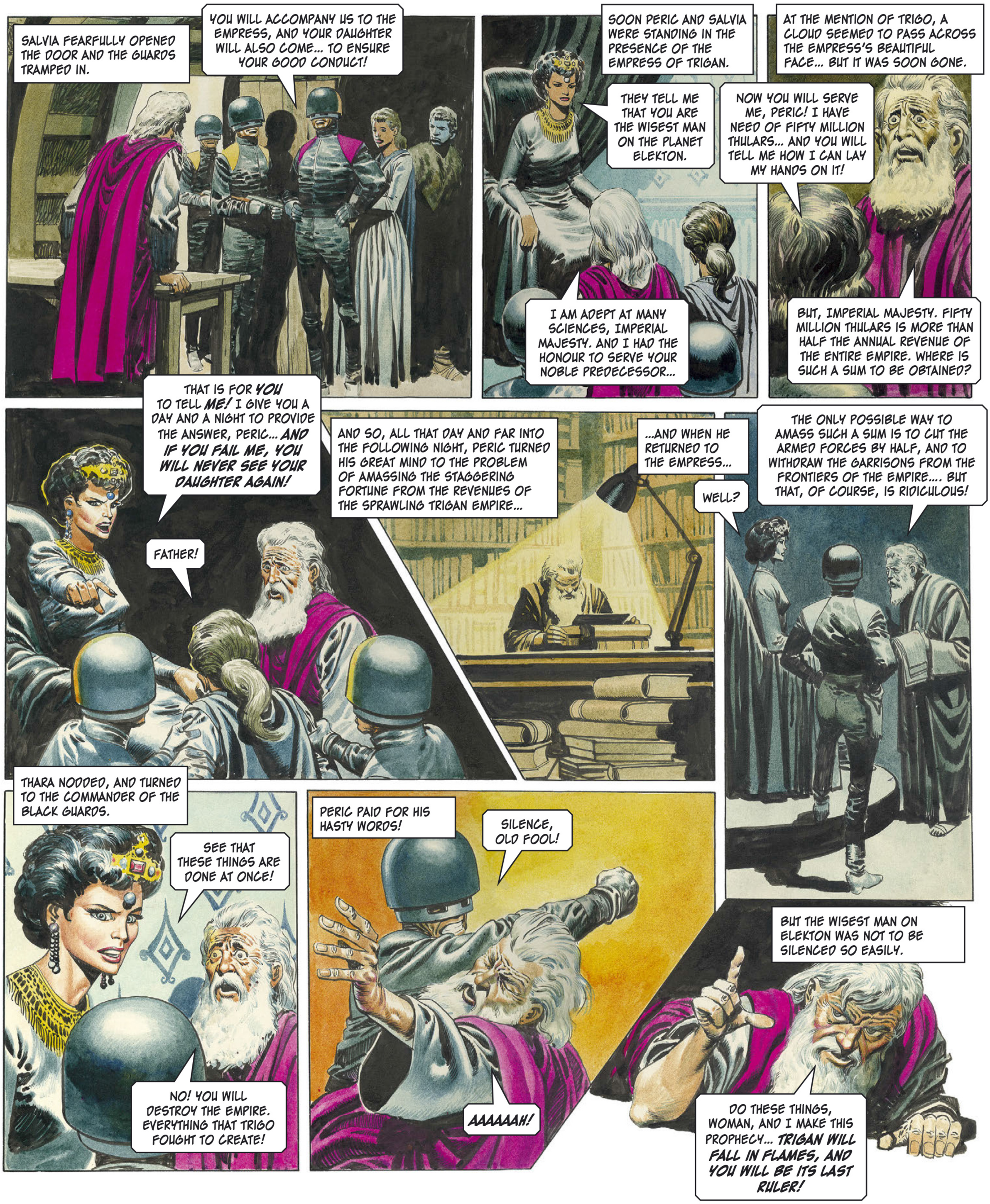
MEANWHILE, DOWN IN THE CITY SQUARE, KEREN HAD COME FACE TO FACE WITH HIS FRIEND SALVIA, DAUGHTER OF PERIC.
KEREN! THANK THE STARS. WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
SALVIA... FOR PITY'S SAKE TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON IN TRIGAN!

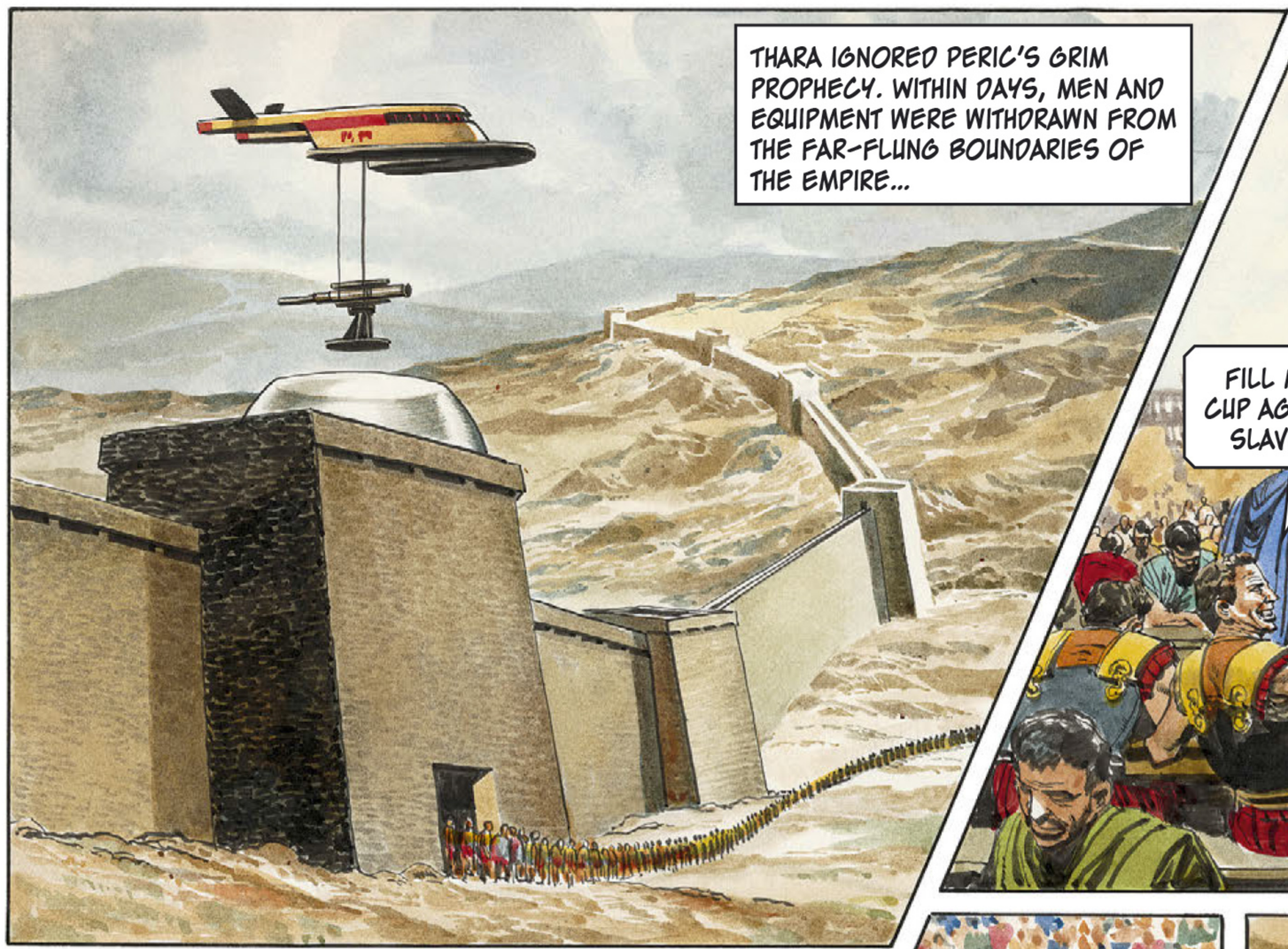
SHE LED HIM TO A HUMBLE HOUSE IN A POOR PART OF THE CITY, AND THERE WAS HER FATHER.
KEREN! MY BOY!
WHAT'S THIS? THE WISEST MAN IN THE EMPIRE, AND THE FRIEND OF TRIGO... LIVING IN POVERTY!

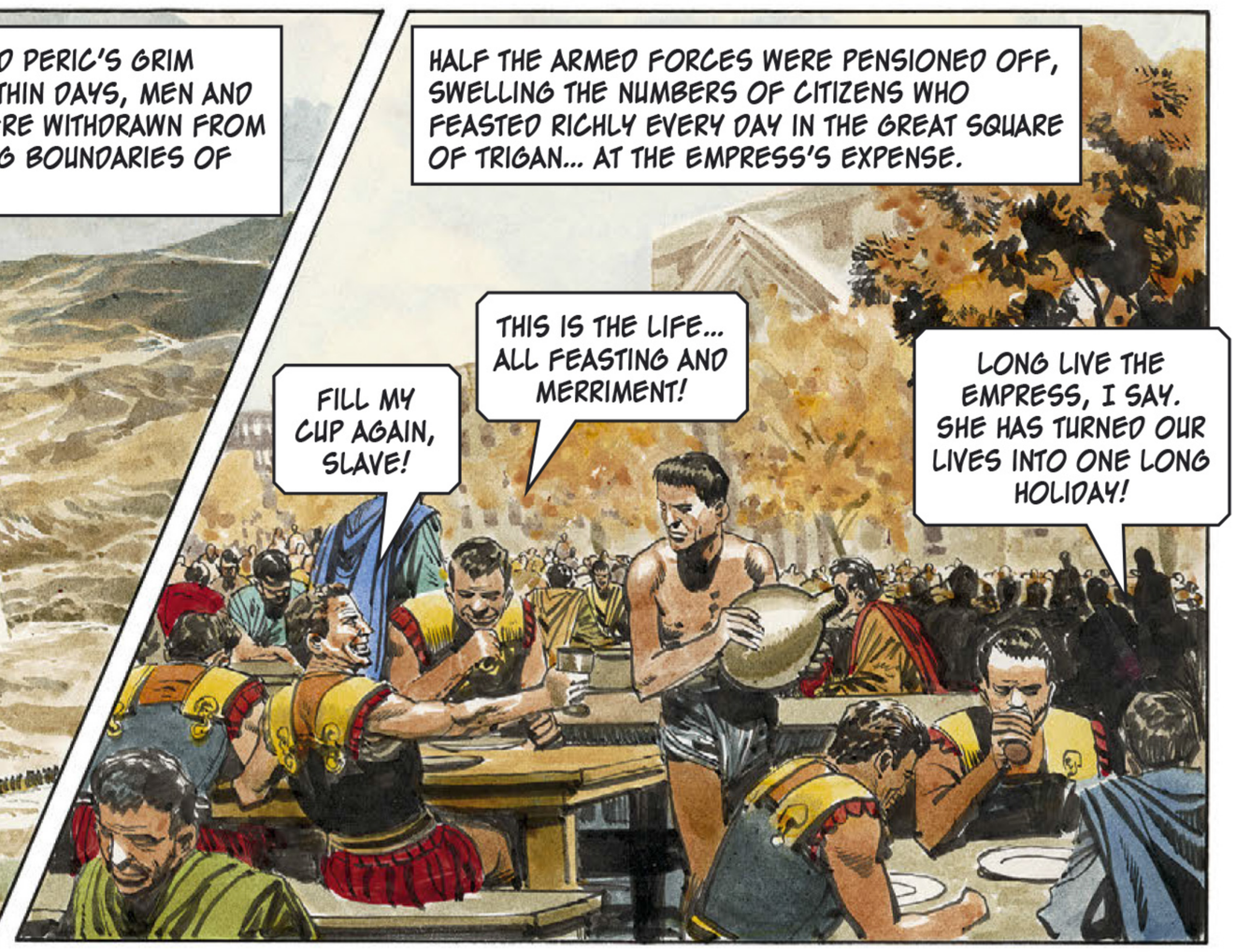

AND THEN... THEY BROKE THE DREADFUL NEWS TO YOUNG KEREN.
TRIGO... BRAG... JANNO... ALL DEAD?
YES, BY ORDER OF THARA, THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT. THOUGH WE ARE TOLD THAT THEY PERISHED IN AN AIR CRASH. AND NOW SHE IS OUR EMPRESS!

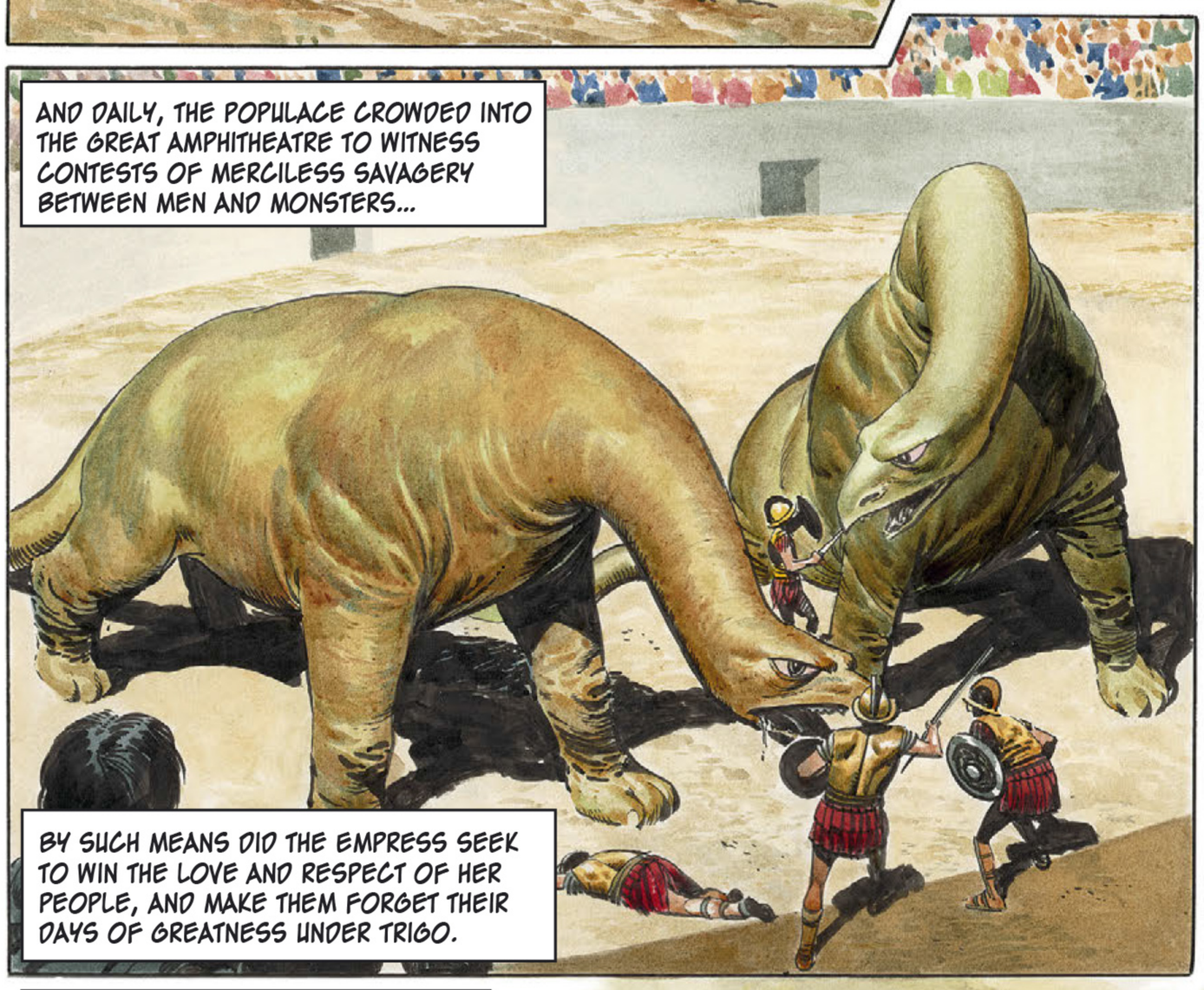
I REFUSED TO SERVE HER, SO I WAS STRIPPED OF ALL MY POSSESSIONS. I WAS LUCKY NOT TO HAVE HAD A SLAVE'S COLLAR HAMMERED AROUND MY THROAT. BUT IT MAY STILL COME TO THAT!
FATHER!
SALVIA CRIED OUT IN ALARM, AS THERE CAME A THUNDERING KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

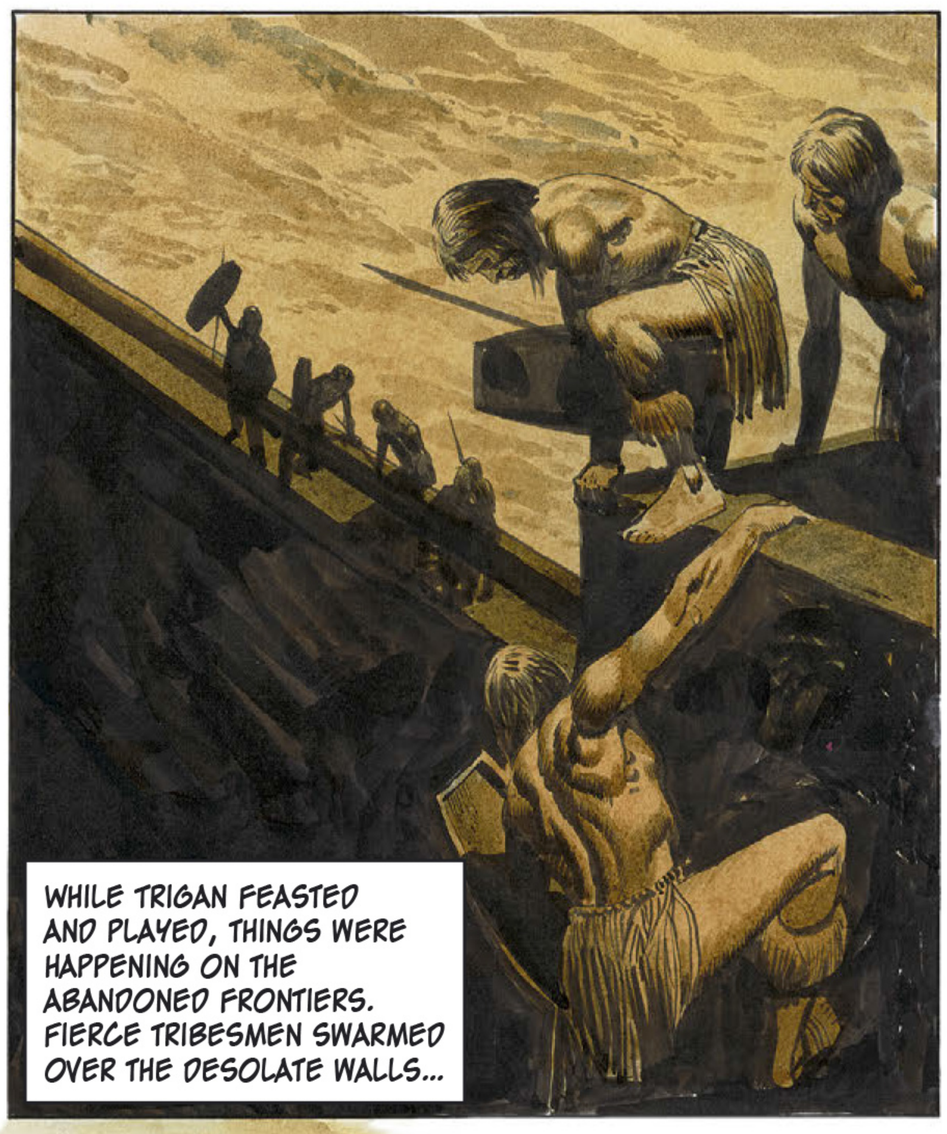

IT WAS THE BLACK GUARD!
OPEN UP, PERIC! OPEN UP... IN THE NAME OF THE EMPRESS!


SALVIA FEARFULLY OPENED THE DOOR AND THE GUARDS TRAMPED IN.
YOU WILL ACCOMPANY US TO THE EMPRESS, AND YOUR DAUGHTER WILL ALSO COME... TO ENSURE YOUR GOOD CONDUCT!
SOON PERIC AND SALVIA WERE STANDING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE EMPRESS OF TRIGAN.
THEY TELL ME THAT YOU ARE THE WISEST MAN ON THE PLANET ELEKTON.
I AM ADEPT AT MANY SCIENCES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. AND I HAD THE HONOUR TO SERVE YOUR NOBLE PREDECESSOR...
AT THE MENTION OF TRIGO, A CLOUD SEEMED TO PASS ACROSS THE EMPRESS'S BEAUTIFUL FACE... BUT IT WAS SOON GONE.
NOW YOU WILL SERVE ME, PERIC! I HAVE NEED OF FIFTY MILLION THULARS... AND YOU WILL TELL ME HOW I CAN LAY MY HANDS ON IT!
BUT, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. FIFTY MILLION THULARS IS MORE THAN HALF THE ANNUAL REVENUE OF THE ENTIRE EMPIRE. WHERE IS SUCH A SUM TO BE OBTAINED?
THAT IS FOR YOU TO TELL ME! I GIVE YOU A DAY AND A NIGHT TO PROVIDE THE ANSWER, PERIC... AND IF YOU FAIL ME, YOU WILL NEVER SEE YOUR DAUGHTER AGAIN!
FATHER!
AND SO, ALL THAT DAY AND FAR INTO THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, PERIC TURNED HIS GREAT MIND TO THE PROBLEM OF AMASSING THE STAGGERING FORTUNE FROM THE REVENUES OF THE SPRAWLING TRIGAN EMPIRE...
...AND WHEN HE RETURNED TO THE EMPRESS...
WELL?
THE ONLY POSSIBLE WAY TO AMASS SUCH A SUM IS TO CUT THE ARMED FORCES BY HALF, AND TO WITHDRAW THE GARRISONS FROM THE FRONTIERS OF THE EMPIRE.... BUT THAT, OF COURSE, IS RIDICULOUS!
THARA NODDED, AND TURNED TO THE COMMANDER OF THE BLACK GUARDS.
SEE THAT THESE THINGS ARE DONE AT ONCE!
NO! YOU WILL DESTROY THE EMPIRE. EVERYTHING THAT TRIGO FOUGHT TO CREATE!
PERIC PAID FOR HIS HASTY WORDS!
SILENCE, OLD FOOL!
AAAAAAH!
BUT THE WISEST MAN ON ELEKTON WAS NOT TO BE SILENCED SO EASILY.
DO THESE THINGS, WOMAN, AND I MAKE THIS PROPHECY... TRIGAN WILL FALL IN FLAMES, AND YOU WILL BE ITS LAST RULER!


THARA IGNORED PERIC'S GRIM PROPHECY. WITHIN DAYS, MEN AND EQUIPMENT WERE WITHDRAWN FROM THE FAR-FLUNG BOUNDARIES OF THE EMPIRE...


HALF THE ARMED FORCES WERE PENSIONED OFF, SWELLING THE NUMBERS OF CITIZENS WHO FEASTED RICHLY EVERY DAY IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF TRIGAN... AT THE EMPRESS'S EXPENSE.
FILL MY CUP AGAIN, SLAVE!
THIS IS THE LIFE... ALL FEASTING AND MERRIMENT!
LONG LIVE THE EMPRESS, I SAY. SHE HAS TURNED OUR LIVES INTO ONE LONG HOLIDAY!


AND DAILY, THE POPULACE CROWDED INTO THE GREAT AMPHITHEATRE TO WITNESS CONTESTS OF MERCILESS SAVAGERY BETWEEN MEN AND MONSTERS...
BY SUCH MEANS DID THE EMPRESS SEEK TO WIN THE LOVE AND RESPECT OF HER PEOPLE, AND MAKE THEM FORGET THEIR DAYS OF GREATNESS UNDER TRIGO.

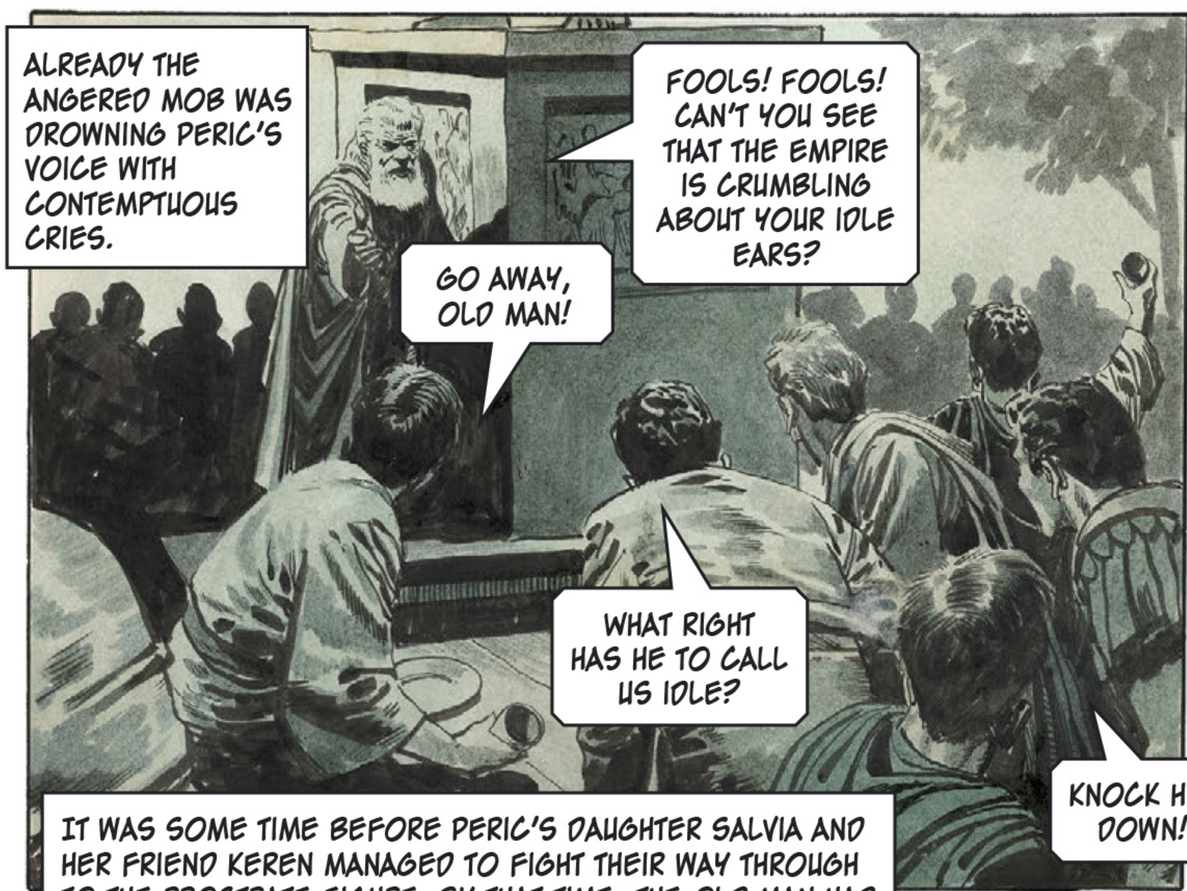

WHILE TRIGAN FEASTED AND PLAYED, THINGS WERE HAPPENING ON THE ABANDONED FRONTIERS. FIERCE TRIBESMEN SWARMED OVER THE DESOLATE WALLS...

...AND TURNED THEIR FACES TOWARDS THE RICH LANDS BEYOND!
PERIC'S PROPHECY WAS BEGINNING TO COME TRUE!

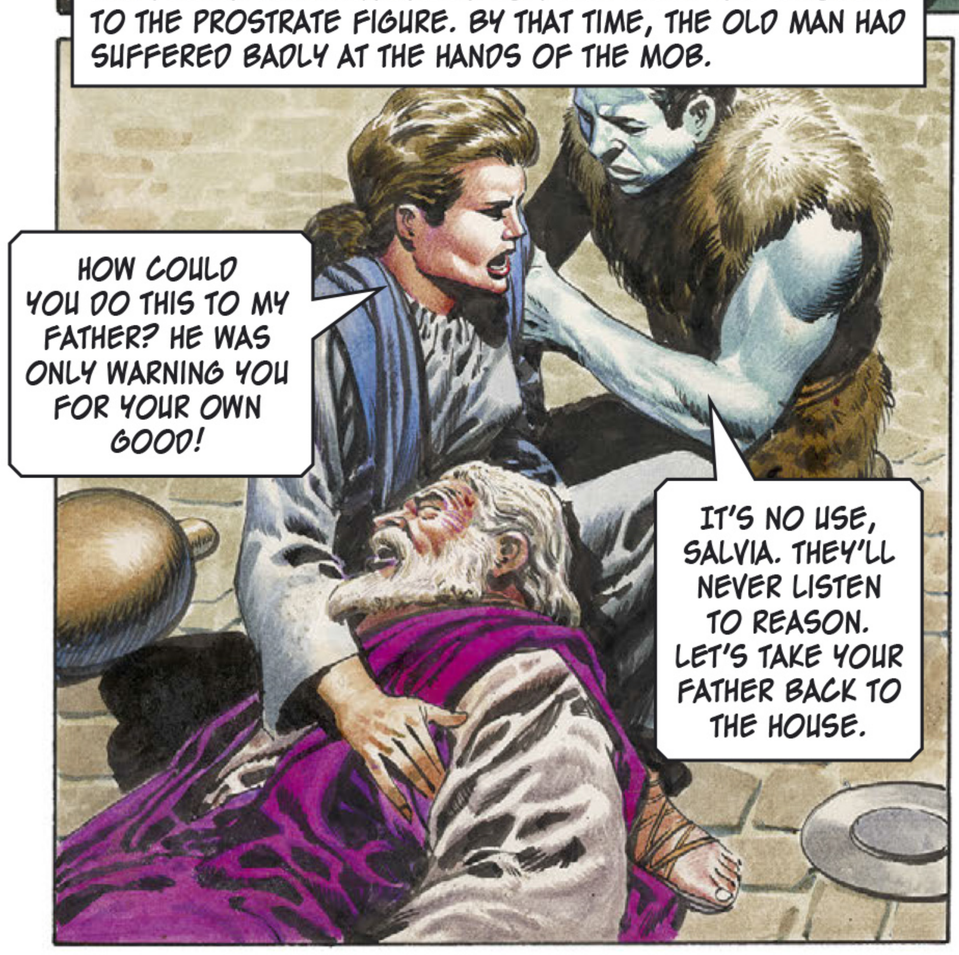
IT WAS MIDDAY, AND THE FEASTING CITIZENS OF TRIGAN TURNED THEIR HEADS IN SURPRISE AS A CHALLENGING VOICE ADDRESSED THEM FROM THE BASE OF A STATUE IN THE GREAT SQUARE.
CITIZENS! THE EMPIRE IS IN DEADLY PERIL!
WHO'S THAT NOISY OLD FOOL?
WHY, IT'S PERIC. MUST HAVE TAKEN LEAVE OF HIS SENSES!

PERIC LASHED THE GORGING MULTITUDE WITH HIS TONGUE.
WHILE YOU FEAST AND PLAY, OUR FAR-OFF FRONTIERS LIE UNGUARDED! WILL YOU STILL FEAST AND PLAY WHEN OUR ENEMIES ARE BATTERING AT THE VERY WALLS OF THE CITY?

A GROUP OF THE DREADED BLACK GUARDS LOOKED ON... AND...
SHALL WE SILENCE HIS WAGGING TONGUE?
NO! LET THE RABBLE DO OUR WORK FOR US!

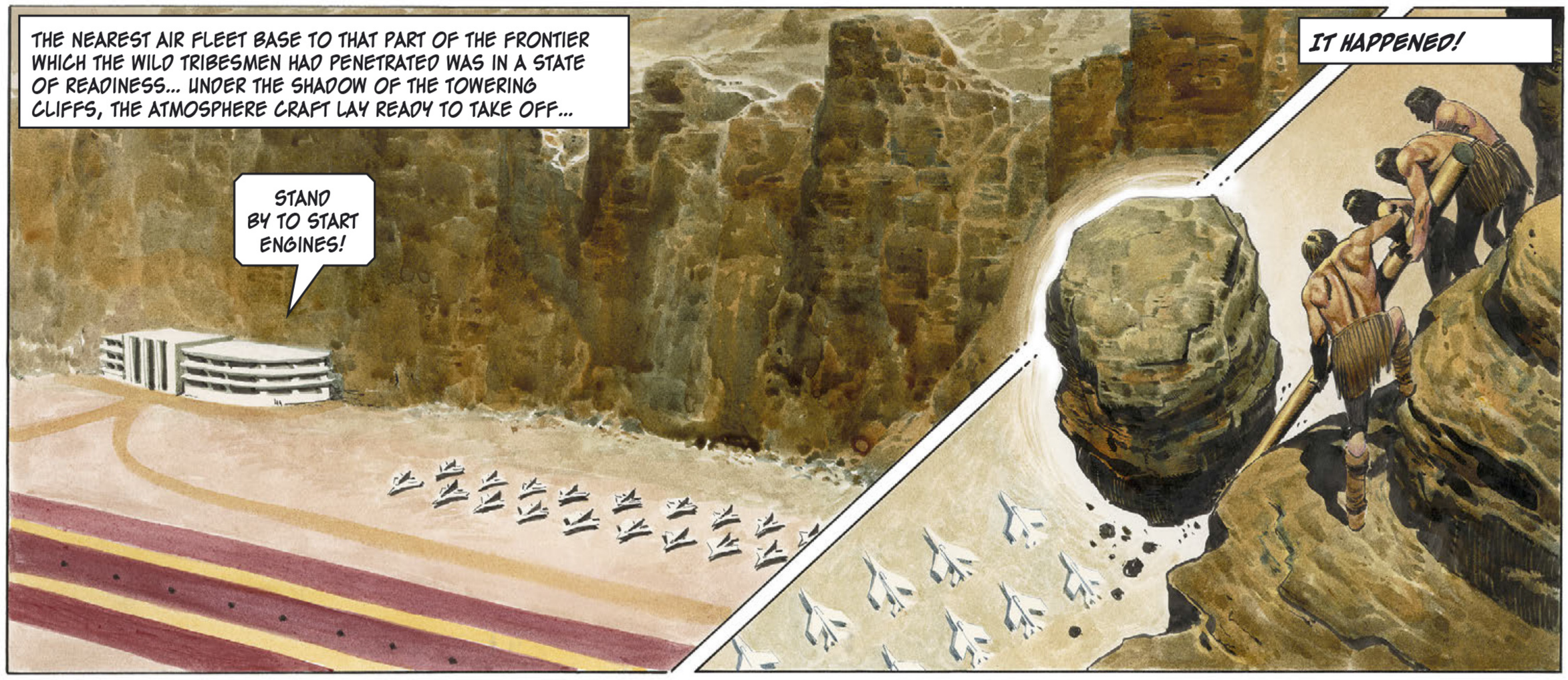

ALREADY THE ANGERED MOB WAS DROWNING PERIC'S VOICE WITH CONTEMPTUOUS CRIES.
FOOLS! FOOLS! CAN'T YOU SEE THAT THE EMPIRE IS CRUMBLING ABOUT YOUR IDLE EARS?
GO AWAY, OLD MAN!
WHAT RIGHT HAS HE TO CALL US IDLE?
KNOCK HIM DOWN!

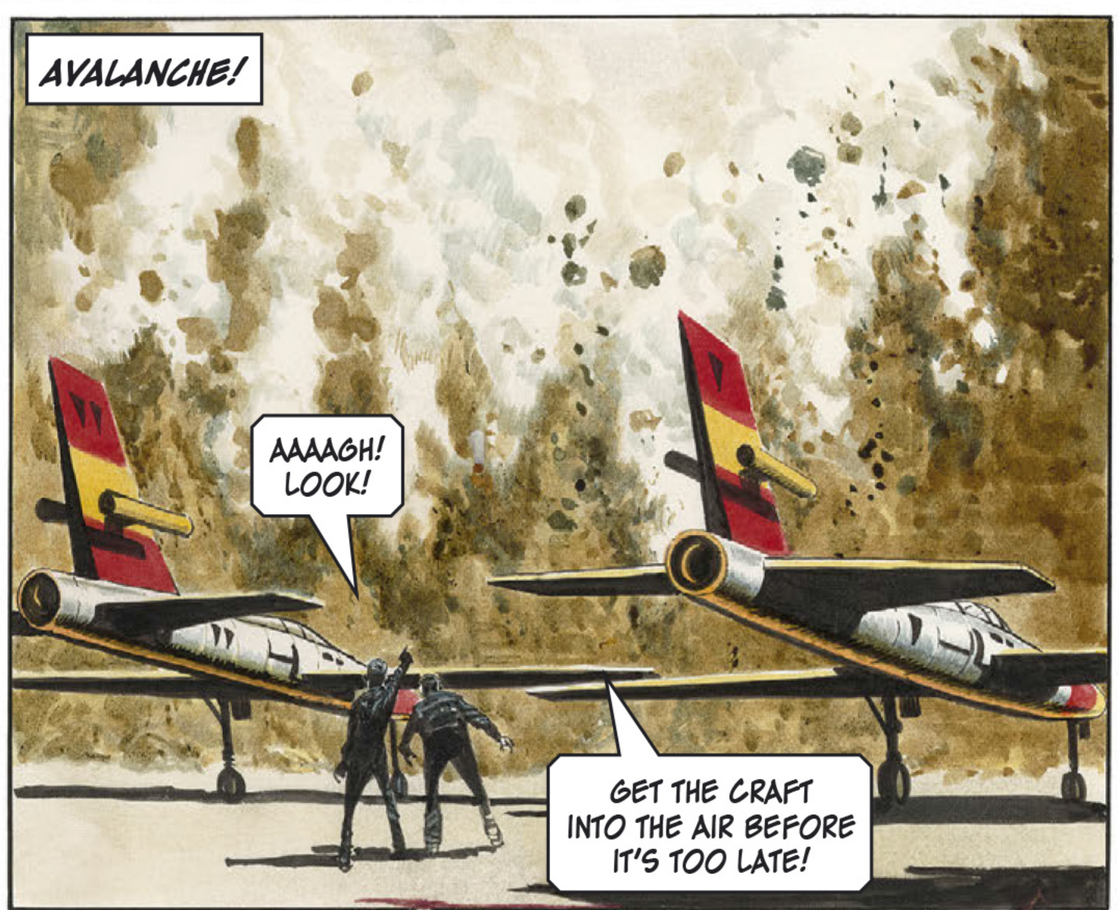
THEN THEY BEGAN TO THROW... AND THE OLD MAN WAS KNOCKED SENSELESS TO THE GROUND.
DOWN WITH HIM!


IT WAS SOME TIME BEFORE PERIC'S DAUGHTER SALVIA AND HER FRIEND KEREN MANAGED TO FIGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH TO THE PROSTRATE FIGURE. BY THAT TIME, THE OLD MAN HAD SUFFERED BADLY AT THE HANDS OF THE MOB.
HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO MY FATHER? HE WAS ONLY WARNING YOU FOR YOUR OWN GOOD!
IT'S NO USE, SALVIA. THEY'LL NEVER LISTEN TO REASON. LET'S TAKE YOUR FATHER BACK TO THE HOUSE.

THE EMPRESS THARA HAD WITNESSED THE WHOLE SCENE FROM THE BALCONY OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE. SHE TURNED TO THE COMMANDER OF THE BLACK GUARD, HER FACE GRAVE.
IS IT TRUE WHAT HE SAYS? IS THE EMPIRE REALLY IN DANGER?
THE OLD FOOL GREATLY EXAGGERATES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY.

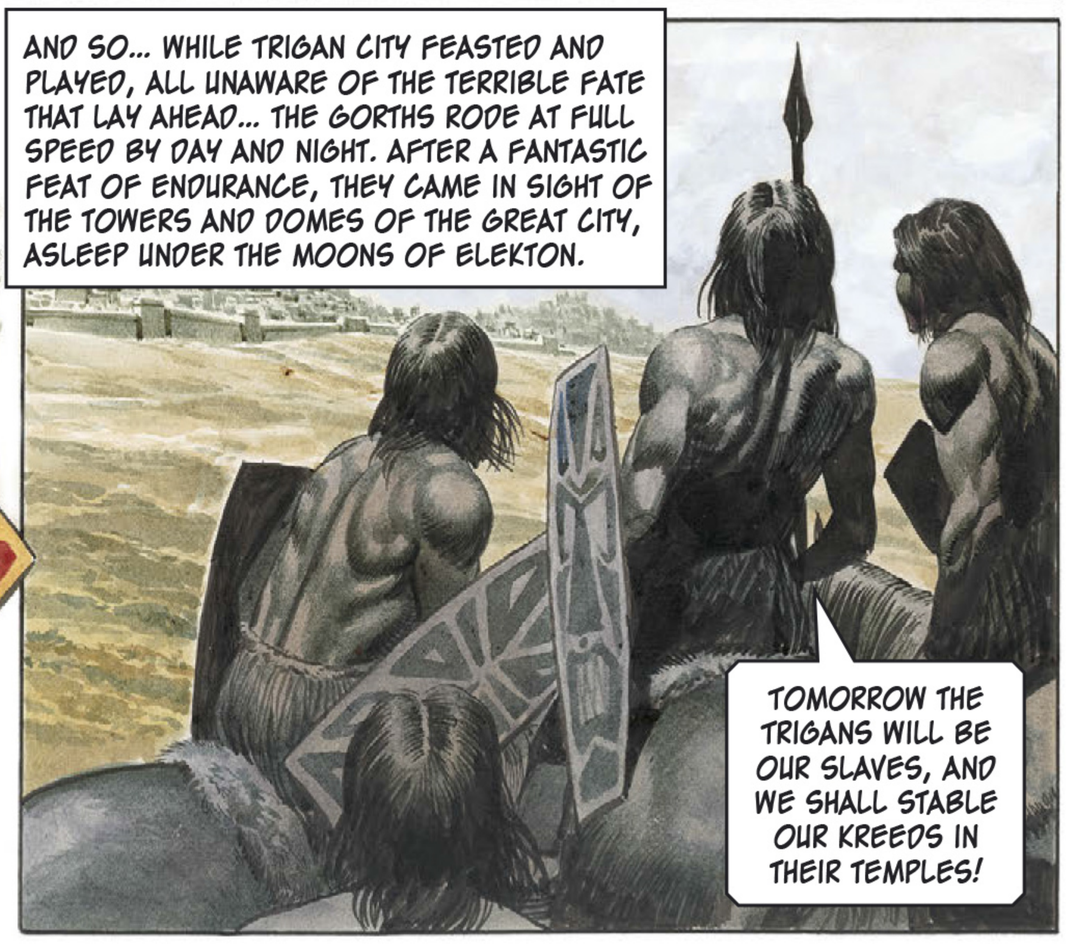
THE COMMANDER WAS SMOOTH... COMFORTING...
TRUE, A SMALL HANDFUL OF GORTH TRIBESMEN HAVE PENETRATED THE FRONTIER AT ONE POINT, BUT THEY ARE TOO FAR AWAY TO CAUSE US ANY CONCERN IN TRIGAN CITY. AND I HAVE GIVEN ORDERS FOR THE NEAREST AIR FLEET TO ATTACK AND WIPE THEM OUT!

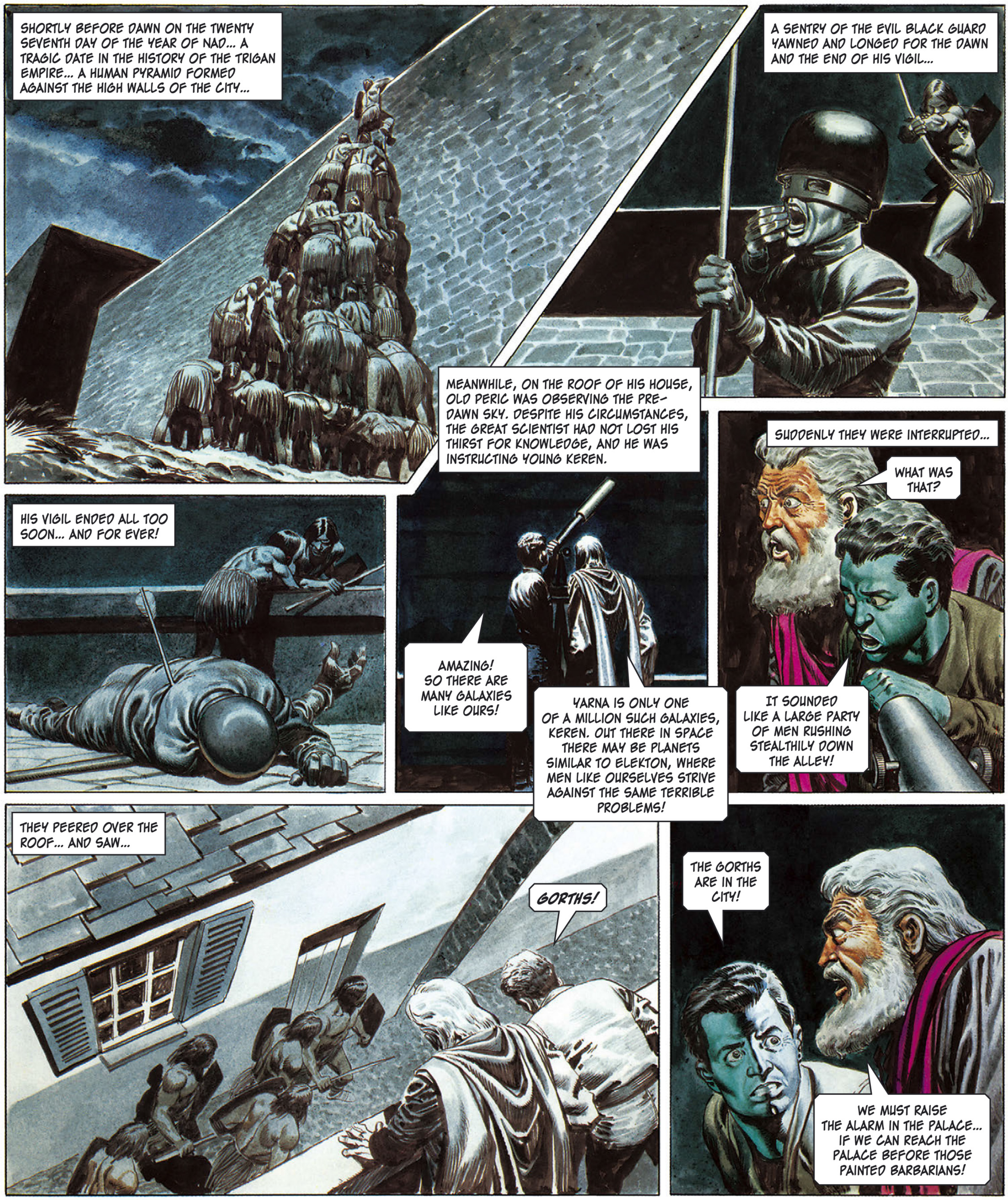

THE NEAREST AIR FLEET BASE TO THAT PART OF THE FRONTIER WHICH THE WILD TRIBESMEN HAD PENETRATED WAS IN A STATE OF READINESS... UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE TOWERING CLIFFS, THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT LAY READY TO TAKE OFF...
STAND BY TO START ENGINES!
IT HAPPENED!

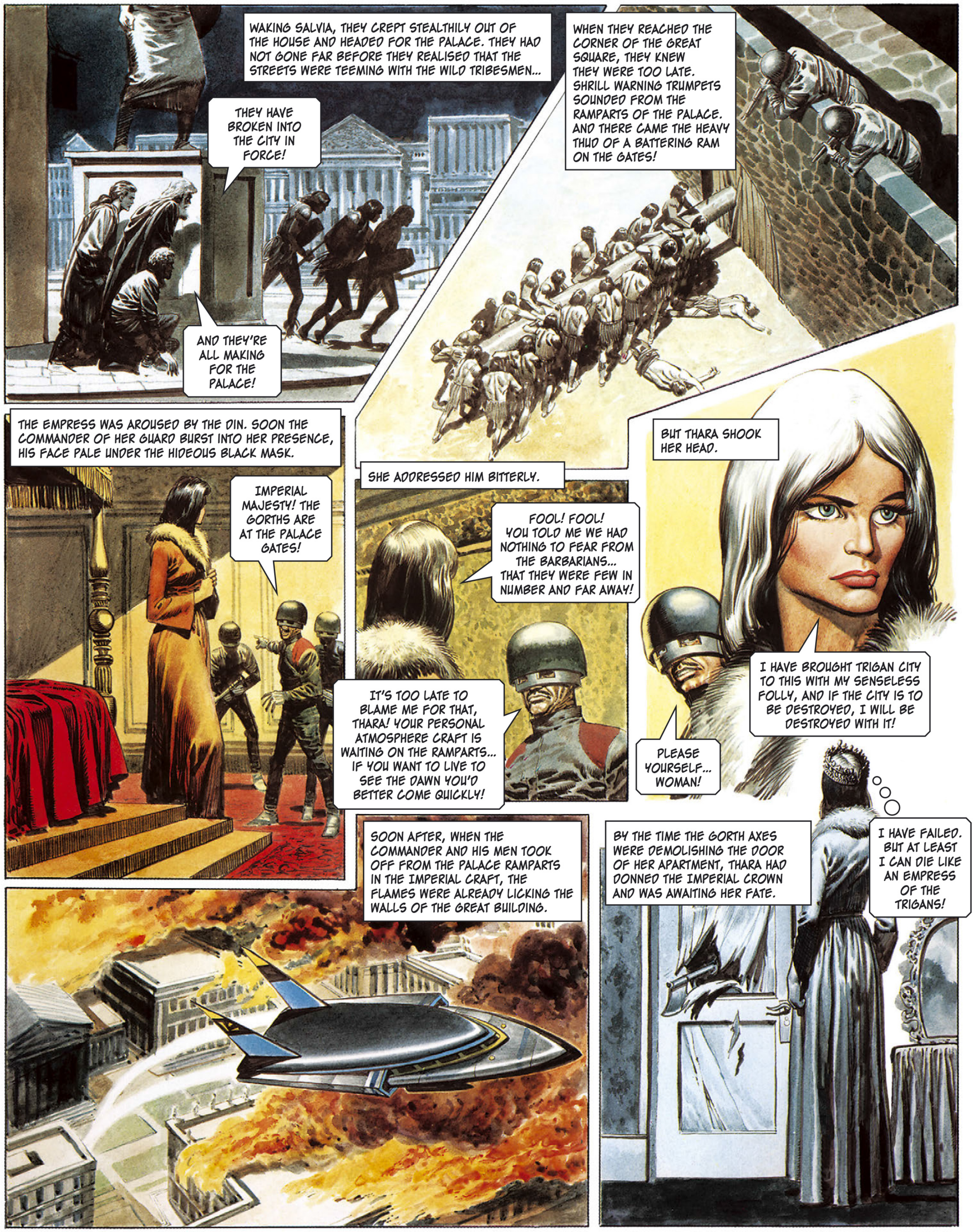

AVALANCHE!
AAAAGH! LOOK!
GET THE CRAFT INTO THE AIR BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

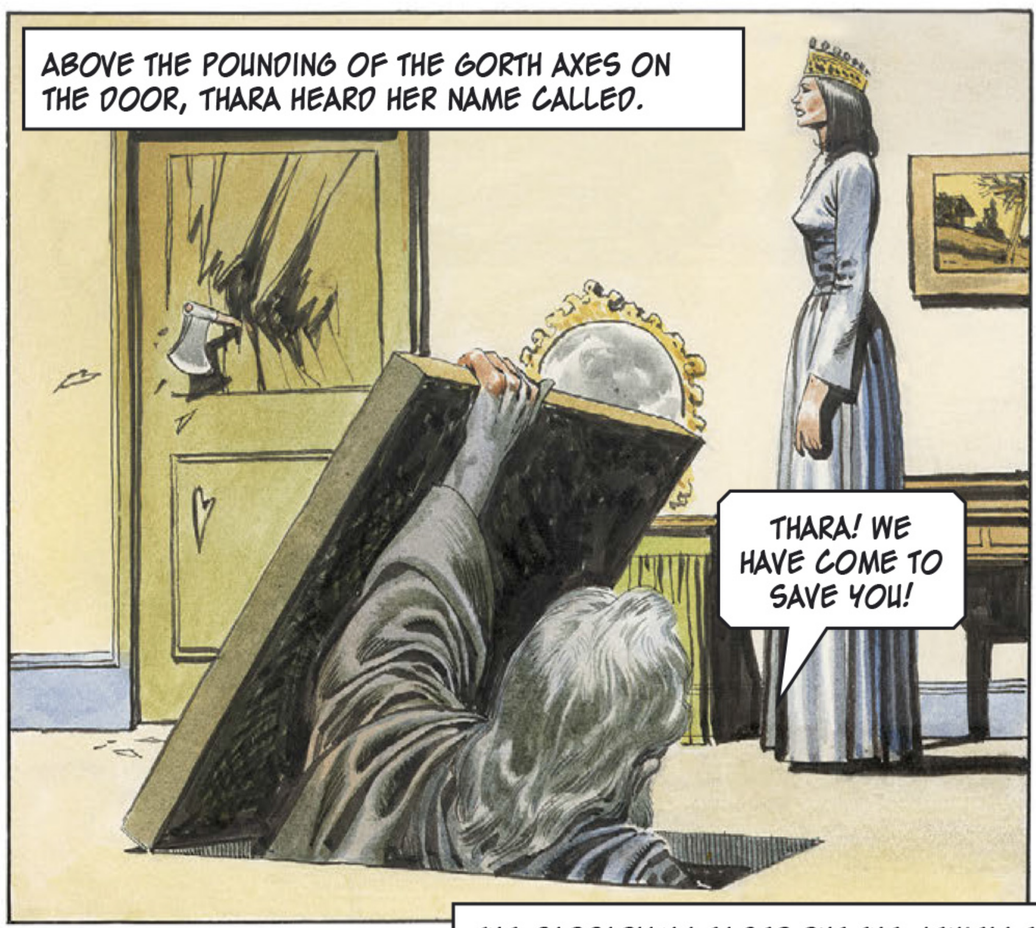
NOT ONE CRAFT OF ALL THAT PROUD FLEET GOT AIRBORNE... ALL WERE SMASHED TO SMITHEREENS!

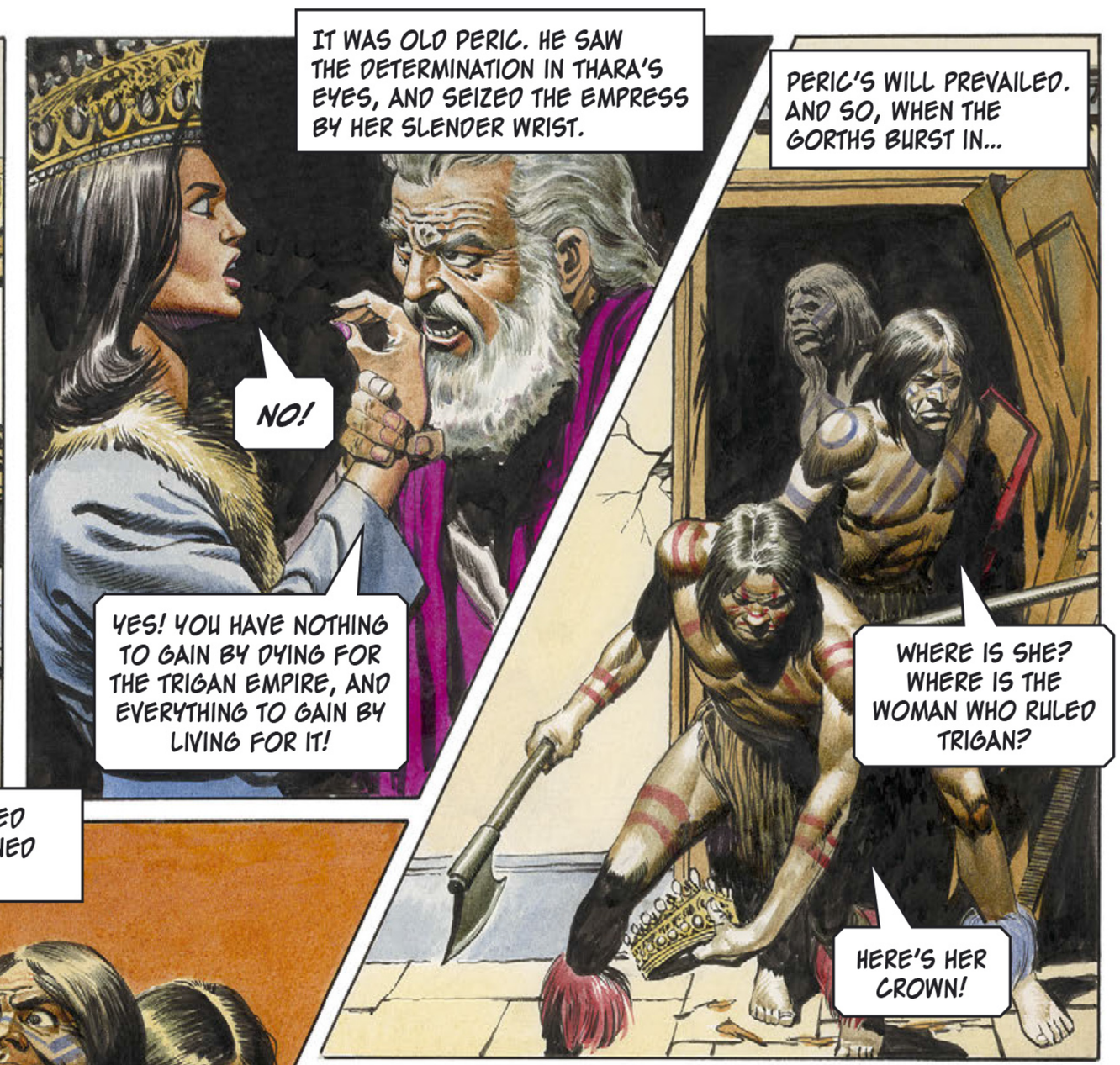
THEIR TASK COMPLETED, THE GORTH TRIBESMEN THREW THEMSELVES ASTRIDE THEIR STURDY KREEDS AND SET OFF AGAIN...
ON TO TRIGAN CITY!


AND SO... WHILE TRIGAN CITY FEASTED AND PLAYED, ALL UNAWARE OF THE TERRIBLE FATE THAT LAY AHEAD... THE GORTHS RODE AT FULL SPEED BY DAY AND NIGHT. AFTER A FANTASTIC FEAT OF ENDURANCE, THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF THE TOWERS AND DOMES OF THE GREAT CITY, ASLEEP UNDER THE MOONS OF ELEKTON.
TOMORROW THE TRIGANS WILL BE OUR SLAVES, AND WE SHALL STABLE OUR KREEDS IN THEIR TEMPLES!


SHORTLY BEFORE DAWN ON THE TWENTY SEVENTH DAY OF THE YEAR OF NAD... A TRAGIC DATE IN THE HISTORY OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE... A HUMAN PYRAMID FORMED AGAINST THE HIGH WALLS OF THE CITY...
A SENTRY OF THE EVIL BLACK GUARD YAWNED AND LONGED FOR THE DAWN AND THE END OF HIS VIGIL...
MEANWHILE, ON THE ROOF OF HIS HOUSE, OLD PERIC WAS OBSERVING THE PRE-DAWN SKY. DESPITE HIS CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GREAT SCIENTIST HAD NOT LOST HIS THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE, AND HE WAS INSTRUCTING YOUNG KEREN.
HIS VIGIL ENDED ALL TOO SOON... AND FOR EVER!
AMAZING! SO THERE ARE MANY GALAXIES LIKE OURS!
YARNA IS ONLY ONE OF A MILLION SUCH GALAXIES, KEREN. OUT THERE IN SPACE THERE MAY BE PLANETS SIMILAR TO ELEKTON, WHERE MEN LIKE OURSELVES STRIVE AGAINST THE SAME TERRIBLE PROBLEMS!
SUDDENLY THEY WERE INTERRUPTED...
WHAT WAS THAT?
IT SOUNDED LIKE A LARGE PARTY OF MEN RUSHING STEALTHILY DOWN THE ALLEY!
THEY PEERED OVER THE ROOF... AND SAW...
GORTHS!
THE GORTHS ARE IN THE CITY!
WE MUST RAISE THE ALARM IN THE PALACE... IF WE CAN REACH THE PALACE BEFORE THOSE PAINTED BARBARIANS!

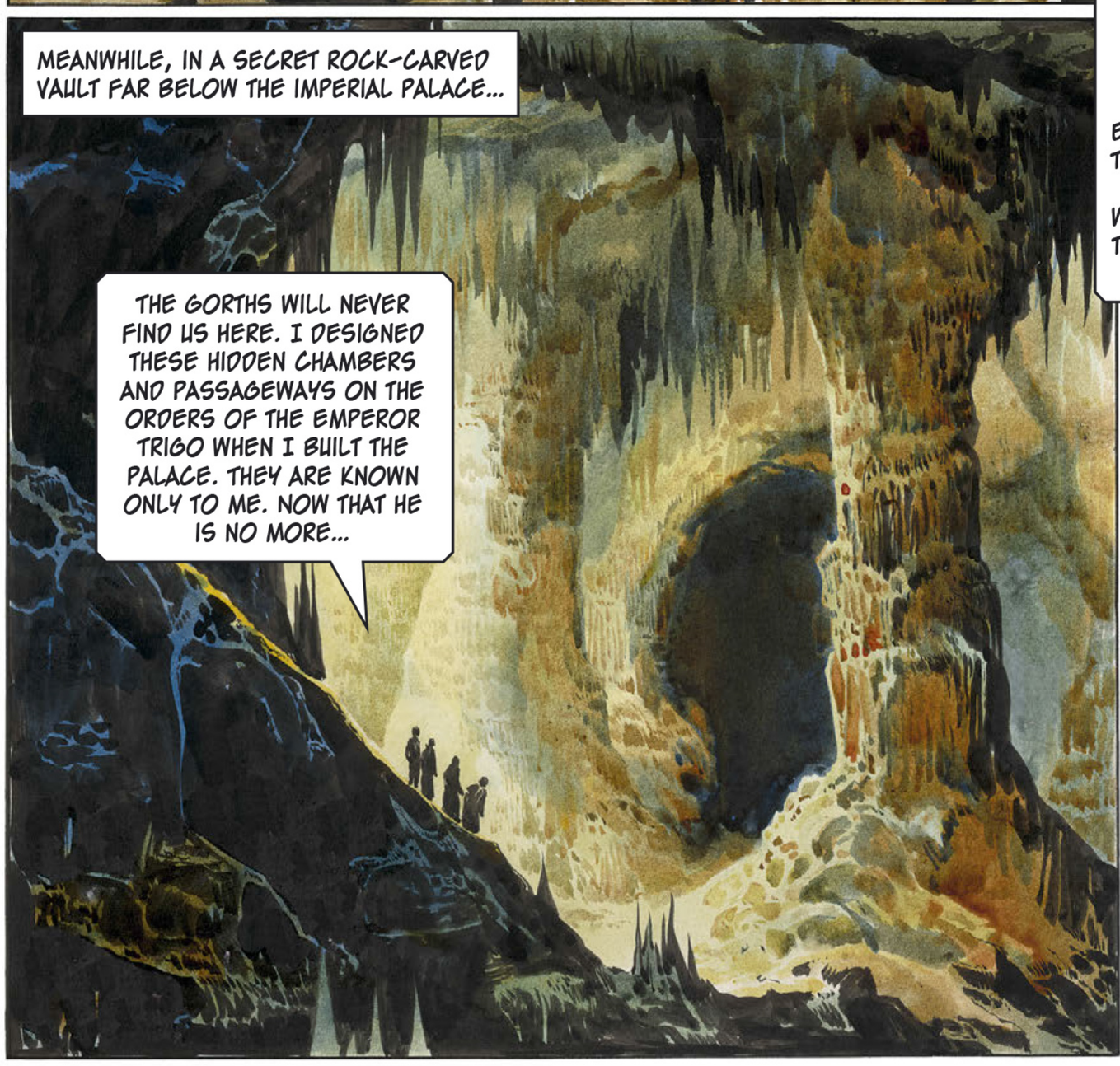

WAKING SALVIA, THEY CREPT STEALTHILY OUT OF THE HOUSE AND HEADED FOR THE PALACE. THEY HAD NOT GONE FAR BEFORE THEY REALISED THAT THE STREETS WERE TEEMING WITH THE WILD TRIBESMEN...
THEY HAVE BROKEN INTO THE CITY IN FORCE!
AND THEY'RE ALL MAKING FOR THE PALACE!
WHEN THEY REACHED THE CORNER OF THE GREAT SQUARE, THEY KNEW THEY WERE TOO LATE. SHRILL WARNING TRUMPETS SOUNDED FROM THE RAMPARTS OF THE PALACE. AND THERE CAME THE HEAVY THUD OF A BATTERING RAM ON THE GATES!
THE EMPRESS WAS AROUSED BY THE DIN. SOON THE COMMANDER OF HER GUARD BURST INTO HER PRESENCE, HIS FACE PALE UNDER THE HIDEOUS BLACK MASK.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! THE GORTHS ARE AT THE PALACE GATES!
SHE ADDRESSED HIM BITTERLY.
FOOL! FOOL! YOU TOLD ME WE HAD NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE BARBARIANS... THAT THEY WERE FEW IN NUMBER AND FAR AWAY!
IT'S TOO LATE TO BLAME ME FOR THAT, THARA! YOUR PERSONAL ATMOSPHERE CRAFT IS WAITING ON THE RAMPARTS... IF YOU WANT TO LIVE TO SEE THE DAWN YOU'D BETTER COME QUICKLY!
BUT THARA SHOOK HER HEAD.
PLEASE YOURSELF... WOMAN!
I HAVE BROUGHT TRIGAN CITY TO THIS WITH MY SENSELESS FOLLY, AND IF THE CITY IS TO BE DESTROYED, I WILL BE DESTROYED WITH IT!
SOON AFTER, WHEN THE COMMANDER AND HIS MEN TOOK OFF FROM THE PALACE RAMPARTS IN THE IMPERIAL CRAFT, THE FLAMES WERE ALREADY LICKING THE WALLS OF THE GREAT BUILDING.
BY THE TIME THE GORTH AXES WERE DEMOLISHING THE DOOR OF HER APARTMENT, THARA HAD DONNED THE IMPERIAL CROWN AND WAS AWAITING HER FATE.
I HAVE FAILED. BUT AT LEAST I CAN DIE LIKE AN EMPRESS OF THE TRIGANS!


ABOVE THE POUNDING OF THE GORTH AXES ON THE DOOR, THARA HEARD HER NAME CALLED.
THARA! WE HAVE COME TO SAVE YOU!


IT WAS OLD PERIC. HE SAW THE DETERMINATION IN THARA'S EYES, AND SEIZED THE EMPRESS BY HER SLENDER WRIST.
NO!
YES! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN BY DYING FOR THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, AND EVERYTHING TO GAIN BY LIVING FOR IT!
PERIC'S WILL PREVAILED. AND SO, WHEN THE GORTHS BURST IN...
WHERE IS SHE? WHERE IS THE WOMAN WHO RULED TRIGAN?
HERE'S HER CROWN!

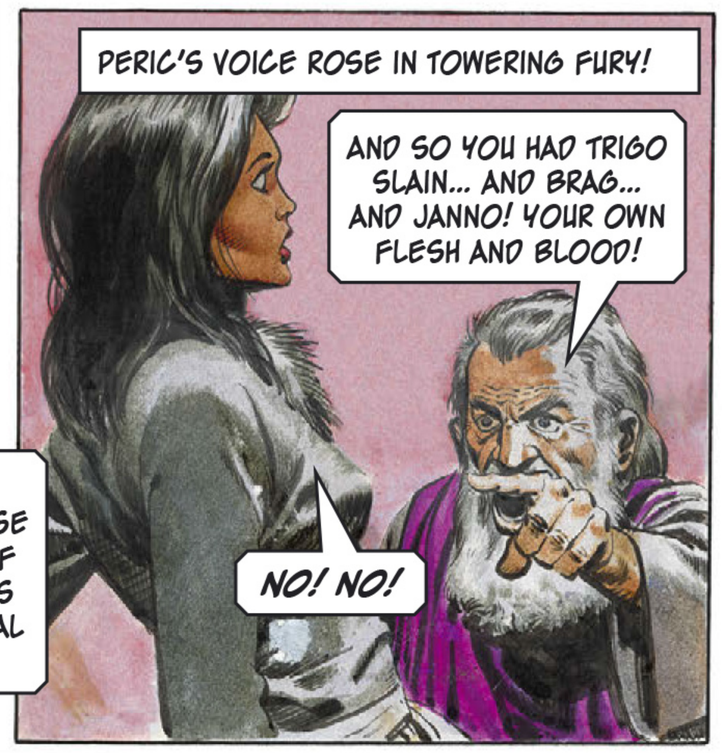
THE BARBARIAN LEADER PUT THE JEWELLED CROWN ON HIS UNKEMPT HEAD AND GRINNED SAVAGELY AT HIS FOLLOWERS.
WELL THEN, FROM THIS MOMENT I AM THE RULER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

ENJOY THE FRUITS OF YOUR VICTORY, MY WARRIORS! THE CITY IS YOURS! TAKE EVERYTHING YOU WANT. THE TRIGANS ARE YOUR SLAVES. LOAD THEM WITH CHAINS AND MAKE THEM SERVE YOU HAND AND FOOT!

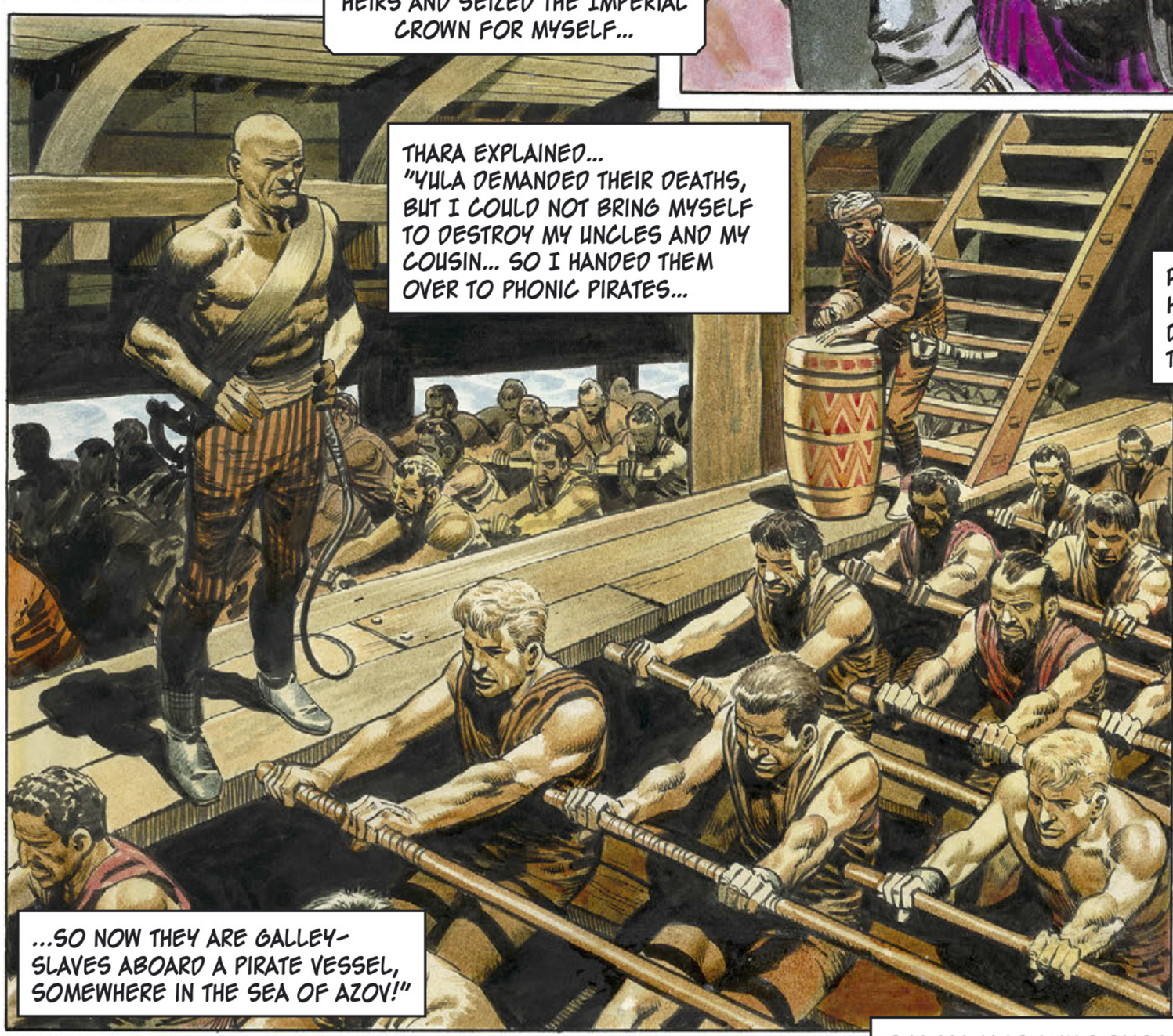

MEANWHILE, IN A SECRET ROCK-CARVED VAULT FAR BELOW THE IMPERIAL PALACE...
THE GORTHS WILL NEVER FIND US HERE. I DESIGNED THESE HIDDEN CHAMBERS AND PASSAGEWAYS ON THE ORDERS OF THE EMPEROR TRIGO WHEN I BUILT THE PALACE. THEY ARE KNOWN ONLY TO ME. NOW THAT HE IS NO MORE...

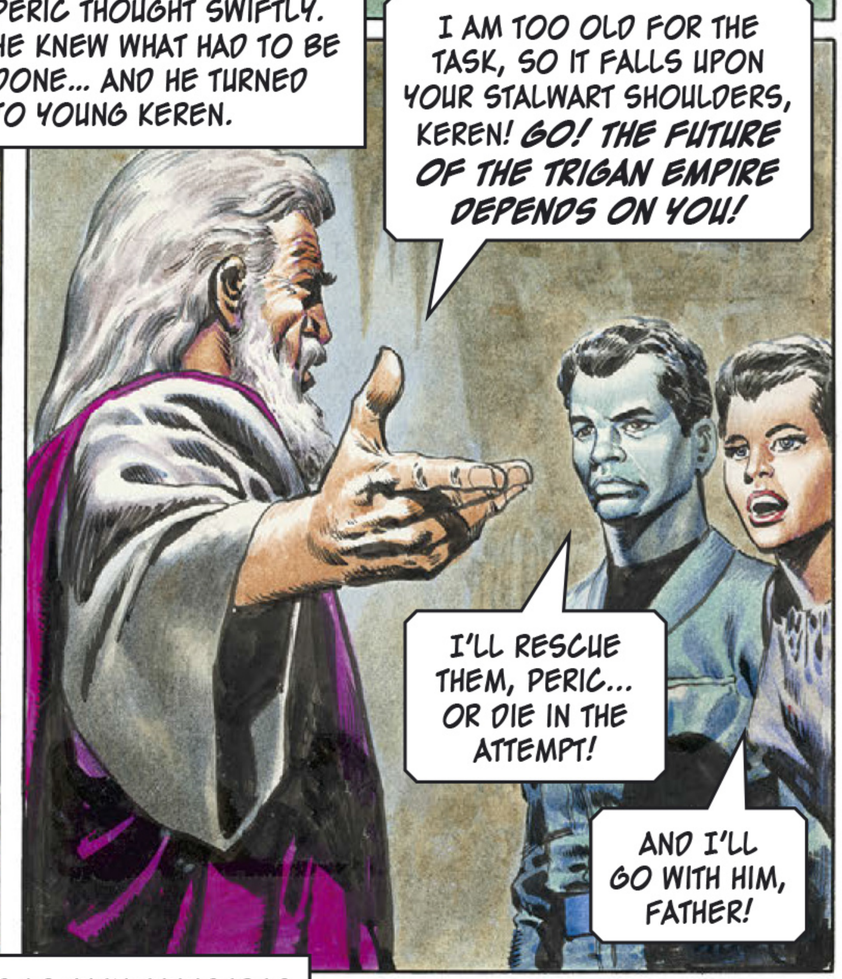
PRESENTLY, OLD PERIC FACED THE TRIGAN EMPRESS ACCUSINGLY.
WELL, THARA... AND WHERE IS YOUR EMPIRE NOW?
YES, PERIC. I HAVE FAILED! I NEVER SHOULD HAVE ALLOWED YULA TO PERSUADE ME INTO THIS MAD VENTURE...I AM NOT FIT TO RULE THE TRIGANS!

YULA IS THE BLACK-HEARTED DEMON WHO COMMANDS YOUR EVIL BLACK GUARDS, IS HE NOT?
YES... IT WAS HE WHO TOLD ME THAT THE EMPIRE WOULD RISE TO AN EVEN GREATER GLORY IF I DISPOSED OF TRIGO AND HIS HEIRS AND SEIZED THE IMPERIAL CROWN FOR MYSELF...


PERIC'S VOICE ROSE IN TOWERING FURY!
AND SO YOU HAD TRIGO SLAIN... AND BRAG... AND JANNO! YOUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD!
NO! NO!

THARA BLURTED OUT THE ASTOUNDING NEWS...
THEY STILL LIVE!
WHA-A-A-A-T?
TRIGO... BRAG... JANNO? STILL ALIVE!


THARA EXPLAINED... "YULA DEMANDED THEIR DEATHS, BUT I COULD NOT BRING MYSELF TO DESTROY MY UNCLES AND MY COUSIN... SO I HANDED THEM OVER TO PHONIC PIRATES...
...SO NOW THEY ARE GALLEY-SLAVES ABOARD A PIRATE VESSEL, SOMEWHERE IN THE SEA OF AZOV!"


PERIC THOUGHT SWIFTLY. HE KNEW WHAT HAD TO BE DONE... AND HE TURNED TO YOUNG KEREN.
I AM TOO OLD FOR THE TASK, SO IT FALLS UPON YOUR STALWART SHOULDERS, KEREN! GO! THE FUTURE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE DEPENDS ON YOU!
I'LL RESCUE THEM, PERIC... OR DIE IN THE ATTEMPT!
AND I'LL GO WITH HIM, FATHER!

BY NOON, THE SAVAGE GORTHS WERE BUSY LOOTING AND BURNING THE CITY. NO ONE SAW KEREN AND SALVIA CREEP OUT OF THE SECRET EXIT AND APPROACH THE LINES OF TETHERED KREEDS IN THE GREAT SQUARE...
CHOOSE YOUR MOUNT... WHEN I GIVE THE ORDER, RIDE FOR THE CITY GATES!

BUT THE ALARM WAS RAISED AS THEY THUNDERED OUT OF THE OPEN GATES... AND A HAIL OF SHOTS HOWLED OVER THEIR BENT HEADS!
Don Lawrence

SALVIA'S KREED FELL WOUNDED BENEATH HER, BUT KEREN CAUGHT HER IN HIS ARMS AND LIFTED HER ON TO HIS OWN CAREERING MOUNT.
THE GORTHS FIRED A FEW MORE RANDOM SHOTS AFTER THE FUGITIVES, AND THEN...
SHALL WE MOUNT AND GO AFTER THEM?
WHY BOTHER? WHAT ARE THE LIVES OF TWO MORE TRIGANS WHEN WE HAVE THE CITY AND EVERYTHING IN IT?
TOWARDS EVENING THEY DREW NEAR THE MOUNTAIN RANGE BEYOND THE PLAIN... AND THERE THEY SAW...
LOOK! THE WRECKAGE OF AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT!
AND SO, BY GOOD FORTUNE, THE TWO COMRADES ESCAPED FROM THE STRICKEN CITY. SOON THEY WERE DEEP IN THE WILDERNESS OF VORG.
IT'S A LONG JOURNEY TO THE SEA OF AZOV, KEREN.
AND THAT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING... ONCE WE REACH THERE WE HAVE TO FIND THE GALLEY ON WHICH TRIGO AND THE OTHERS ARE ENSLAVED... AND THEN FIND SOME MEANS TO SNATCH THEM AWAY!
THEY DISMOUNTED AND CLAWED THEIR WAY UP THE CRAGGY SLOPE.
BY THE STARS! IT'S THE IMPERIAL TRIGAN CRAFT!
THE BLACK GUARDS USED IT TO ESCAPE FROM THE CITY!
SOON THEY WERE EXAMINING THE WRECKAGE. IT WAS ALL TOO CLEAR THAT THE BLACK GUARDS HAD PAID FOR THEIR CRIMES IN THE DISASTER.
NOT A SINGLE SURVIVOR!
BUT KEREN WAS MISTAKEN!
AAAAAH!... AHHHH!... HELP ME!
IT'S YULA!... THE COMMANDER OF THE BLACK GUARDS HIMSELF!

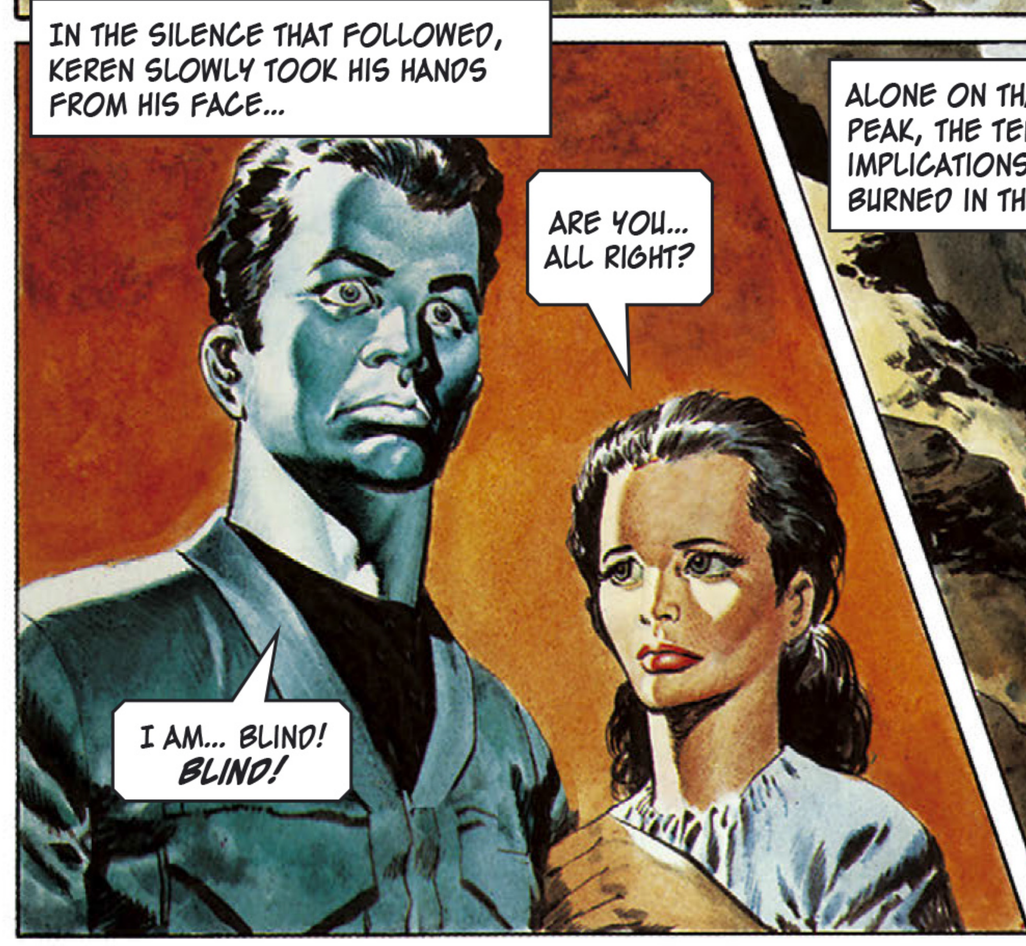
THEY HELPED THE SCOUNDRELLY YULA TO HIS FEET.
THANK THE STARS YOU CAME! THAT FOOL OF A PILOT... HE FLEW TOO LOW AND LOST HIS VISIBILITY IN A DUST STORM... AND THEN... STRAIGHT INTO THE MOUNTAIN!

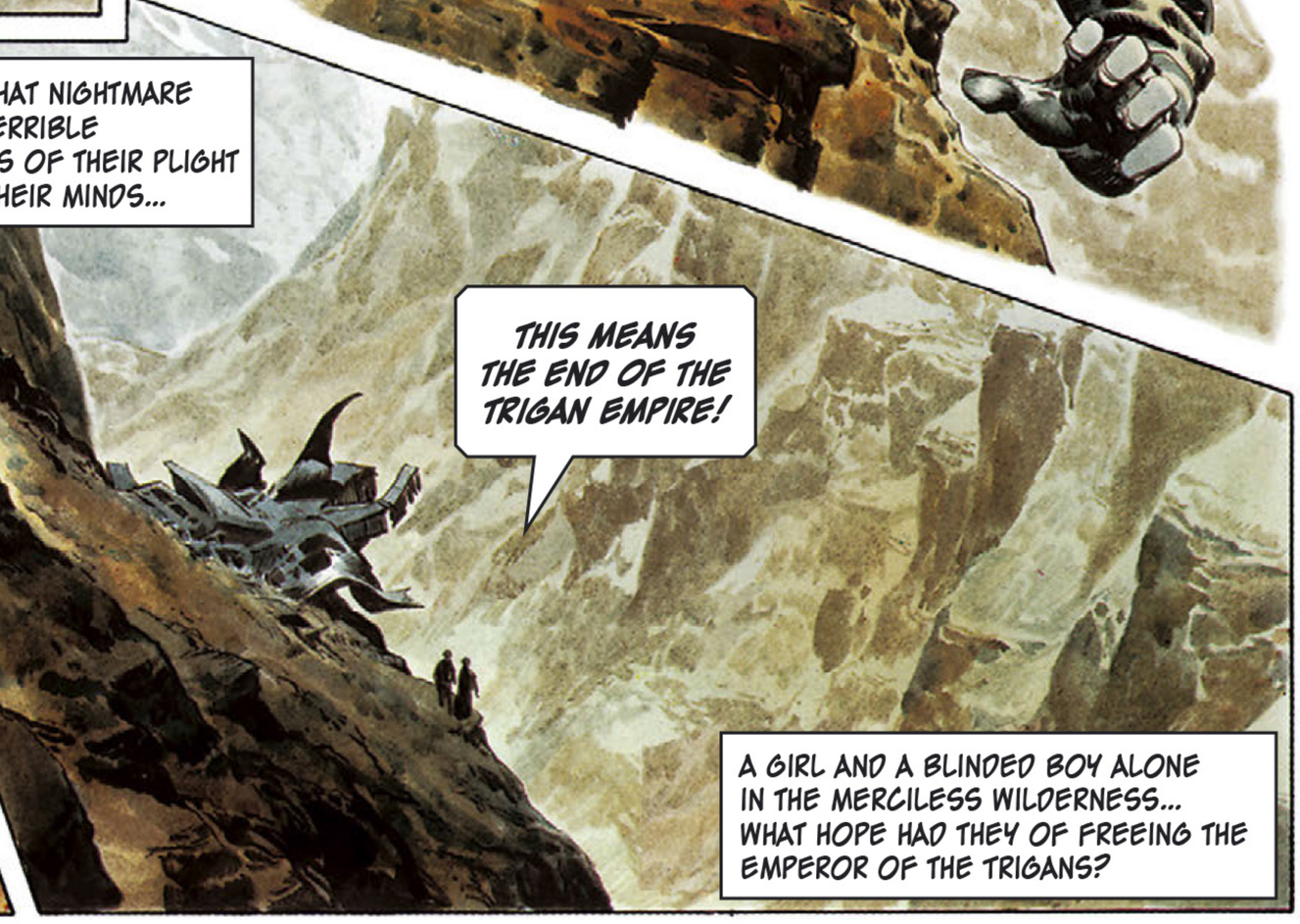
THEY MADE HIM COMFORTABLE, THEN KEREN HARSHLY TOLD HIM OF HIS FATE.
YOU WILL HAVE LITTLE CAUSE TO BE THANKFUL TO US, YULA! YOU ARE NOW OUR PRISONER, AND WHEN WE HAVE RESCUED THE EMPEROR, HE HIMSELF WILL CONDEMN YOU TO DEATH UNDER THE TRIGAN LAW!

WITH A SNARL OF FURY, YULA RAISED HIMSELF UP, A PISTOL IN HIS HAND!
INSOLENT BRAT! YOU'LL NEVER LIVE TO BE MY JAILER!

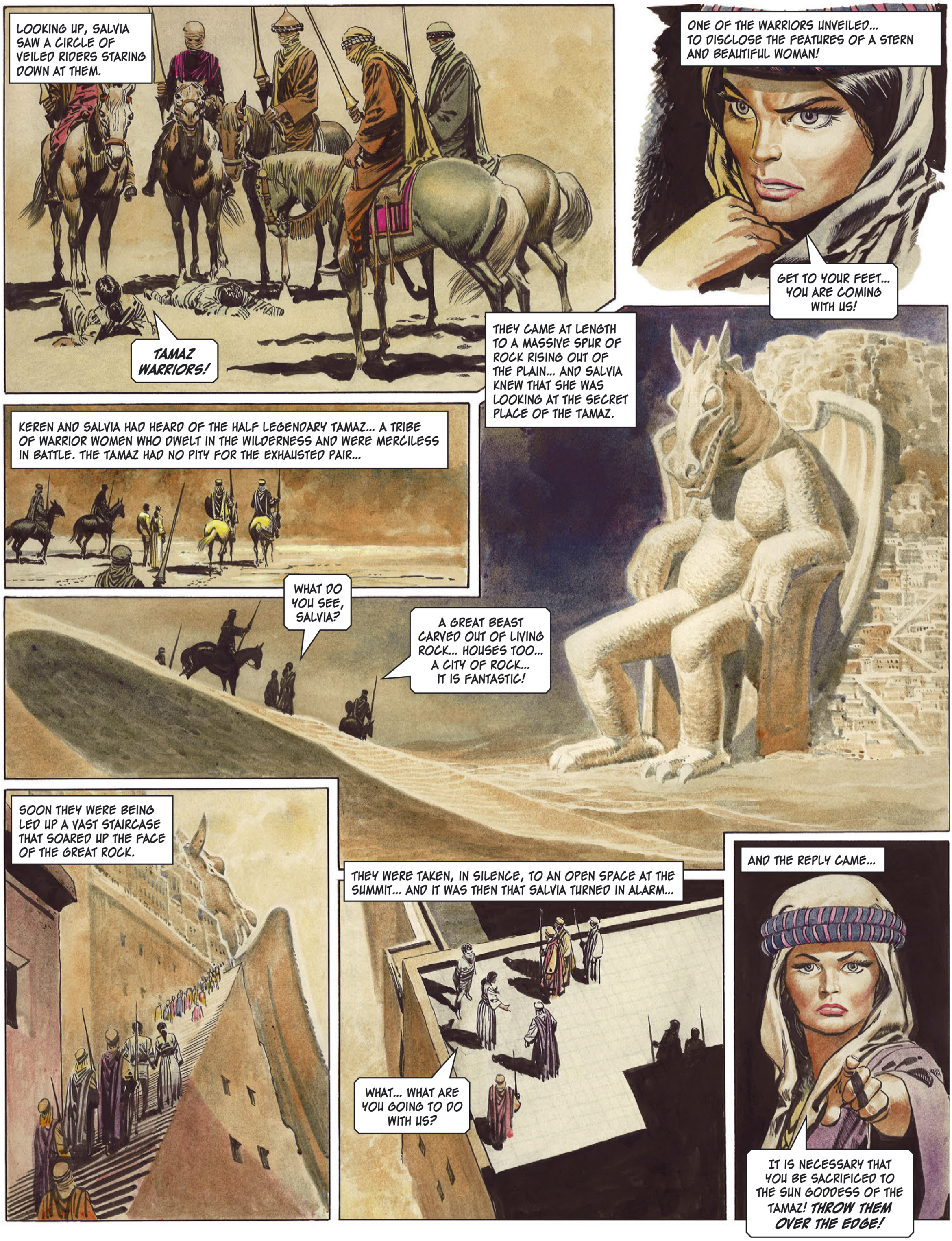
KEREN LEAPT, HIS ARM FLAILING... THE PISTOL DISCHARGED WITH A FLASH OF SEARING LIGHT!

KEREN STAGGERED BACK, HIS HANDS PRESSED TO HIS EYES...
WHILE YULA MISSED HIS FOOTING AND FELL WITH A HOWL OF DESPAIR... TO DESTRUCTION!
AAAAAAAGH!

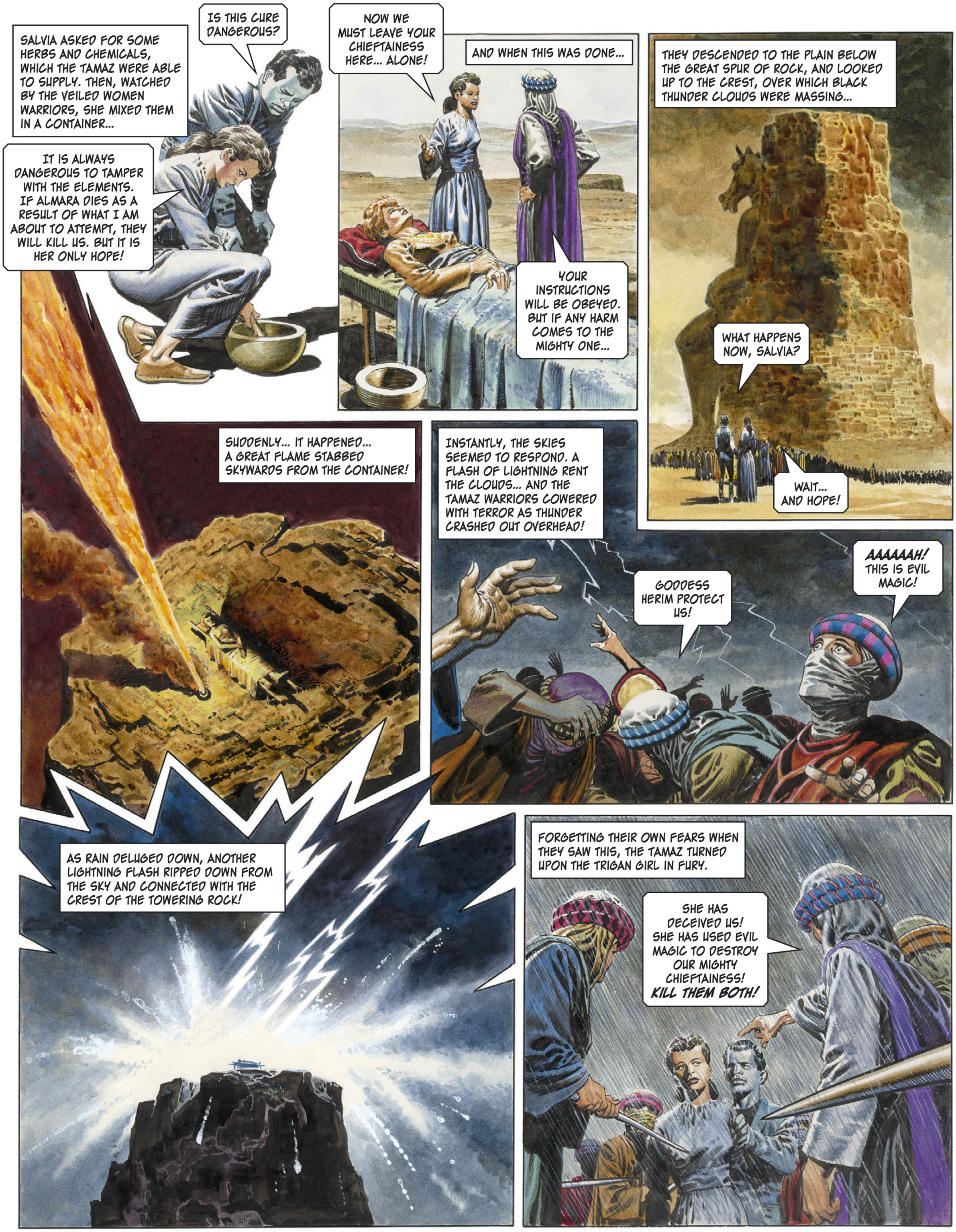

IN THE SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED, KEREN SLOWLY TOOK HIS HANDS FROM HIS FACE...
ARE YOU... ALL RIGHT?
I AM... BLIND! BLIND!

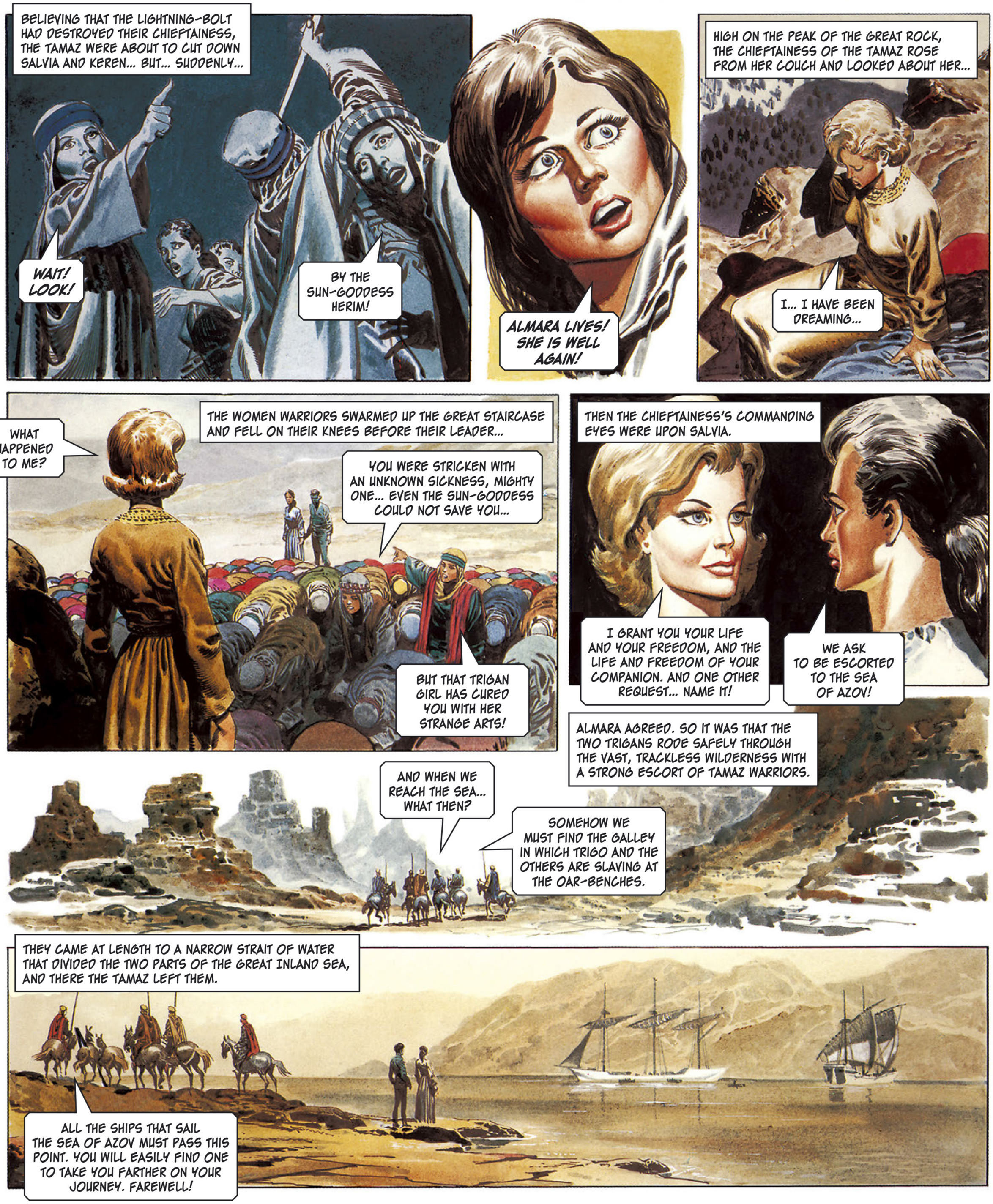

ALONE ON THAT NIGHTMARE PEAK, THE TERRIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR PLIGHT BURNED IN THEIR MINDS...
THIS MEANS THE END OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
A GIRL AND A BLINDED BOY ALONE IN THE MERCILESS WILDERNESS... WHAT HOPE HAD THEY OF FREEING THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS?

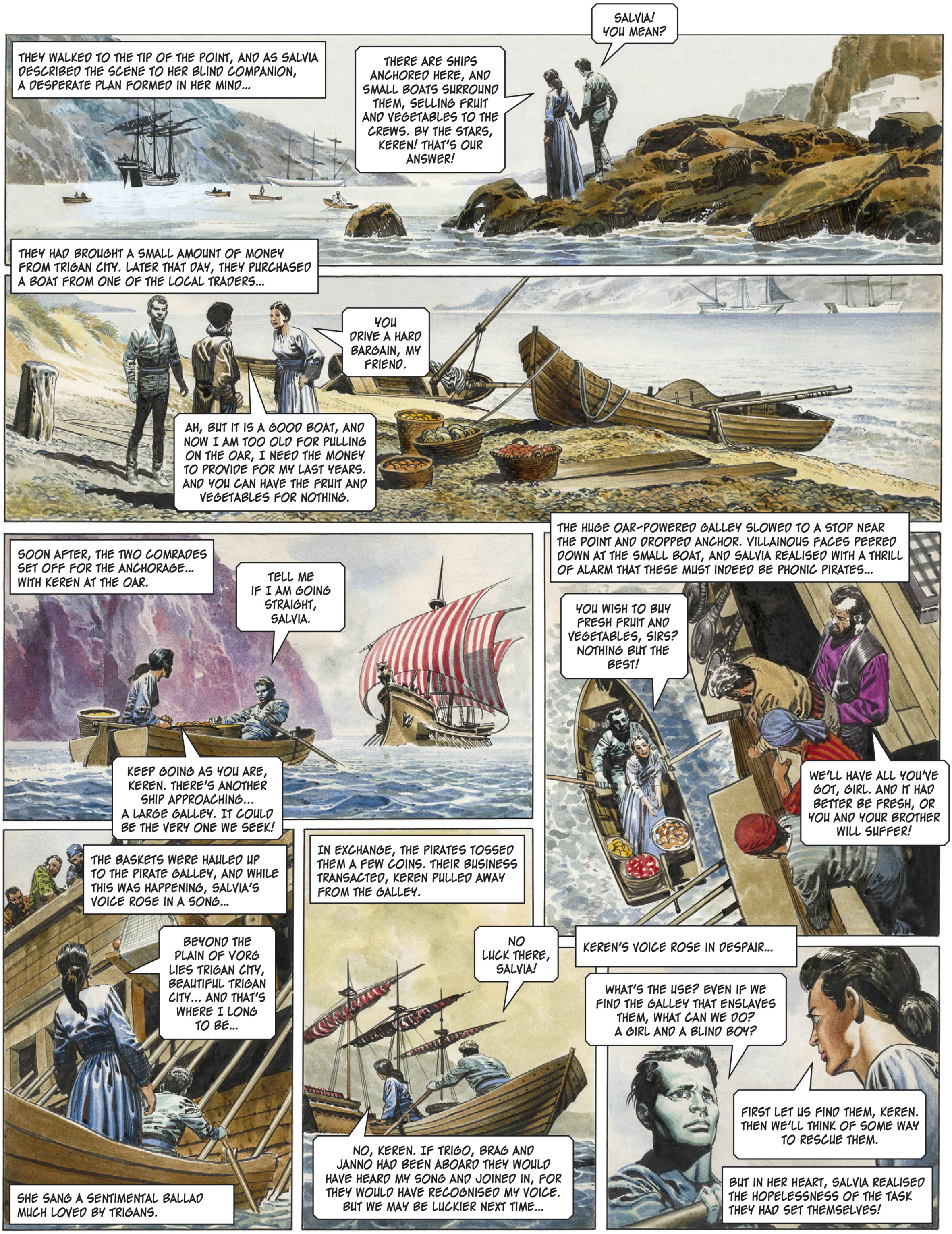
KEREN GAVE WAY TO DESPAIR... BUT SALVIA RALLIED HIM...
WHAT USE AM I IN THIS QUEST? ...BLIND!
BLIND OR NOT, I CAN'T GO ON WITHOUT YOU, KEREN! ALL'S NOT LOST. WE STILL HAVE OUR KREED, AND IT WILL CARRY US BOTH TO THE SEA OF AZOV!
BUT WHEN THEY DESCENDED THE MOUNTAIN, A SHOCK AWAITED THEM!
WHAT IS IT... WHAT DO YOU SEE!
OH, NO!
THE KREED... SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO THE KREED!
A MENACING HISS TOLD THEM ALL THEY NEEDED TO KNOW! A NOBRA, THE DEADLIEST SERPENT OF THE PLANET ELEKTON, HAD BITTEN THEIR KREED!
THIS TIME IT WAS THE GIRL WHO DESPAIRED. AND THE BLINDED BOY WHO GAVE HER ENCOURAGEMENT.
YOU WERE RIGHT, KEREN. THERE'S NO HOPE OF OUR EVER REACHING TRIGO. AND THE TRIGAN EMPIRE IS FINISHED!
NOT WHILE WE STILL LIVE, SALVIA! COME ON. WE'LL WALK TO THE SEA OF AZOV. AND WHEN WE'RE TOO WEARY TO WALK, WE'LL CRAWL!
AND SO, THEY SET OFF... ACROSS THE SCORCHING WILDERNESS.
LATER, THEY FELL, EXHAUSTED AND PARCHED WITH THIRST.
IT'S NO USE... NO USE...
AND THEN... A SHADOW FELL ACROSS THEM!
AAAAAAH!


LOOKING UP, SALVIA SAW A CIRCLE OF VEILED RIDERS STARING DOWN AT THEM.
TAMAZ WARRIORS!
ONE OF THE WARRIORS UNVEILED... TO DISCLOSE THE FEATURES OF A STERN AND BEAUTIFUL WOMAN!
GET TO YOUR FEET... YOU ARE COMING WITH US!
THEY CAME AT LENGTH TO A MASSIVE SPUR OF ROCK RISING OUT OF THE PLAIN... AND SALVIA KNEW THAT SHE WAS LOOKING AT THE SECRET PLACE OF THE TAMAZ.
KEREN AND SALVIA HAD HEARD OF THE HALF LEGENDARY TAMAZ... A TRIBE OF WARRIOR WOMEN WHO DWELT IN THE WILDERNESS AND WERE MERCILESS IN BATTLE. THE TAMAZ HAD NO PITY FOR THE EXHAUSTED PAIR...
WHAT DO YOU SEE, SALVIA?
A GREAT BEAST CARVED OUT OF LIVING ROCK... HOUSES TOO... A CITY OF ROCK... IT IS FANTASTIC!
SOON THEY WERE BEING LED UP A VAST STAIRCASE THAT SOARED UP THE FACE OF THE GREAT ROCK.
THEY WERE TAKEN, IN SILENCE, TO AN OPEN SPACE AT THE SUMMIT... AND IT WAS THEN THAT SALVIA TURNED IN ALARM...
WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH US?
AND THE REPLY CAME...
IT IS NECESSARY THAT YOU BE SACRIFICED TO THE SUN GODDESS OF THE TAMAZ! THROW THEM OVER THE EDGE!

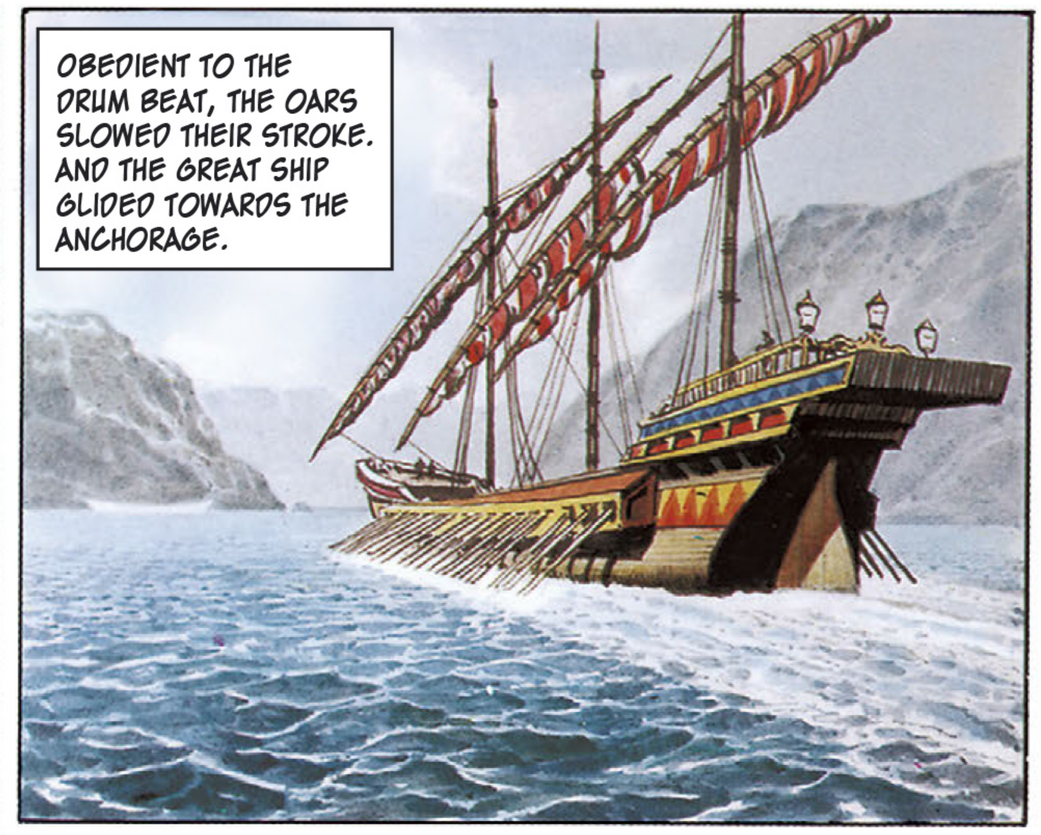
AS SALVIA AND KEREN WERE FORCED TO THE EDGE OF THE DIZZY DROP, ONE OF THE TAMAZ CRIED OUT TO THE SKY...
O GODDESS HERIM, WHO RULES THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON, ACCEPT THESE SACRIFICES, AND SAVE THE LIFE OF OUR MIGHTY CHIEFTAINESS!
ON HEARING THE CRY, SALVIA TURNED...
WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOUR CHIEFTAINESS? AND HOW CAN OUR DEATHS SAVE HER LIFE?
THE MIGHTY ONE HAS BEEN STRICKEN WITH A STRANGE SICKNESS, AND ONLY HERIM CAN SAVE HER... PROCEED WITH THE SACRIFICES!
NO! YOU ARE BLINDED BY YOUR FOOLISH SUPERSTITIONS! I AM AN ADEPT OF THE HEALING ARTS. WHY DESTROY ME, WHEN I COULD CURE YOUR CHIEFTAINESS?
CRIES OF ANGER FROM THE SURROUNDING TAMAZ WERE SILENCED BY THE WORDS OF ONE OF THE OLDER WOMEN...
THE GIRL INSULTS THE GODDESS!
DESTROY HER!
NO! I SAY THE GIRL SHOULD BE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO PROVE HER WORDS. AFTER ALL, TWELVE HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED ALREADY, AND HERIM HAS NOT ANSWERED OUR PRAYERS!
AND SO, THE TWO PRISONERS WERE LED TO A VAST CHAMBER CARVED IN THE HEART OF THAT GREAT SPUR OF ROCK.
THERE LIES ALMARA, CHIEFTAINESS OF THE TAMAZ!
SALVIA BENT OVER THE BEAUTIFUL FACE OF THE UNCONSCIOUS CHIEFTAINESS... AND...
CAN YOU REALLY CURE HER?
YES, I CAN CURE HER! LET HER BE CARRIED UP TO THE SUMMIT OF THE ROCK!
THE TAMAZ CARRIED THEIR LEADER UP TO THE HIGHEST PART OF THE ROCK, WHILE SALVIA GAZED UP AT THE CLOUDS MASSING IN THE SKY ABOVE...
MY FATHER TAUGHT ME A DESPERATE MEANS TO SAVE LIFE BY HARNESSING THE ELEMENTS...


SALVIA ASKED FOR SOME HERBS AND CHEMICALS, WHICH THE TAMAZ WERE ABLE TO SUPPLY. THEN, WATCHED BY THE VEILED WOMEN WARRIORS, SHE MIXED THEM IN A CONTAINER...
IS THIS CURE DANGEROUS?
IT IS ALWAYS DANGEROUS TO TAMPER WITH THE ELEMENTS. IF ALMARA DIES AS A RESULT OF WHAT I AM ABOUT TO ATTEMPT, THEY WILL KILL US. BUT IT IS HER ONLY HOPE!
NOW WE MUST LEAVE YOUR CHIEFTAINESS HERE... ALONE!
AND WHEN THIS WAS DONE...
YOUR INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE OBEYED. BUT IF ANY HARM COMES TO THE MIGHTY ONE...
THEY DESCENDED TO THE PLAIN BELOW THE GREAT SPUR OF ROCK, AND LOOKED UP TO THE CREST, OVER WHICH BLACK THUNDER CLOUDS WERE MASSING...
WHAT HAPPENS NOW, SALVIA?
WAIT... AND HOPE!
SUDDENLY... IT HAPPENED... A GREAT FLAME STABBED SKYWARDS FROM THE CONTAINER!
INSTANTLY, THE SKIES SEEMED TO RESPOND. A FLASH OF LIGHTNING RENT THE CLOUDS... AND THE TAMAZ WARRIORS COWERED WITH TERROR AS THUNDER CRASHED OUT OVERHEAD!
GODDESS HERIM PROTECT US!
AAAAAAH! THIS IS EVIL MAGIC!
AS RAIN DELUGED DOWN, ANOTHER LIGHTNING FLASH RIPPED DOWN FROM THE SKY AND CONNECTED WITH THE CREST OF THE TOWERING ROCK!
FORGETTING THEIR OWN FEARS WHEN THEY SAW THIS, THE TAMAZ TURNED UPON THE TRIGAN GIRL IN FURY.
SHE HAS DECEIVED US! SHE HAS USED EVIL MAGIC TO DESTROY OUR MIGHTY CHIEFTAINESS! KILL THEM BOTH!

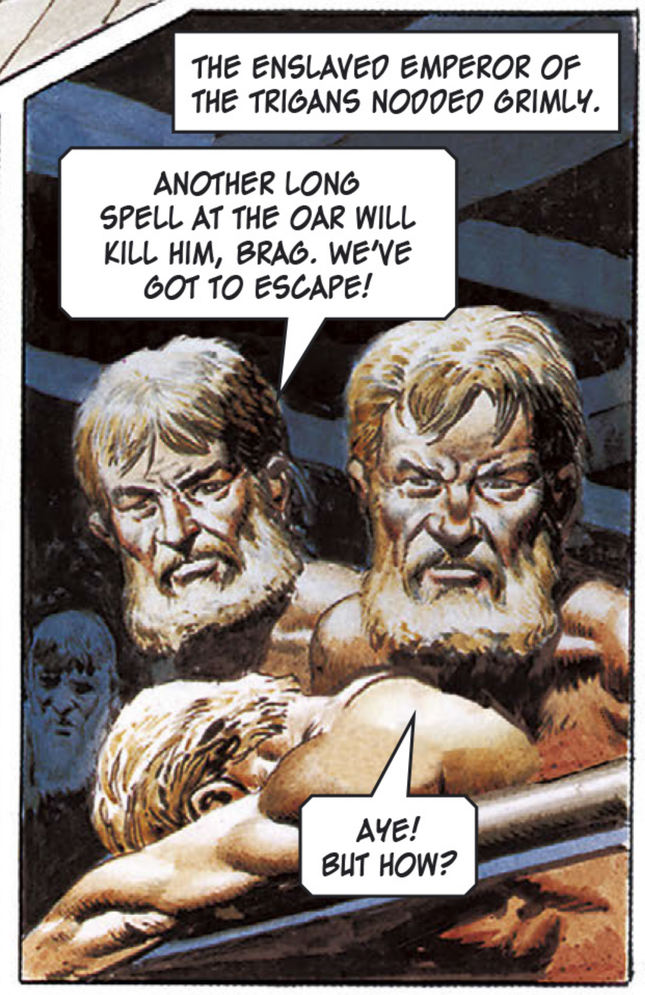

BELIEVING THAT THE LIGHTNING-BOLT HAD DESTROYED THEIR CHIEFTAINESS, THE TAMAZ WERE ABOUT TO CUT DOWN SALVIA AND KEREN... BUT... SUDDENLY...
WAIT! LOOK!
BY THE SUN-GODDESS HERIM!
ALMARA LIVES! SHE IS WELL AGAIN!
HIGH ON THE PEAK OF THE GREAT ROCK, THE CHIEFTAINESS OF THE TAMAZ ROSE FROM HER COUCH AND LOOKED ABOUT HER...
I... I HAVE BEEN DREAMING...
WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?
THE WOMEN WARRIORS SWARMED UP THE GREAT STAIRCASE AND FELL ON THEIR KNEES BEFORE THEIR LEADER...
YOU WERE STRICKEN WITH AN UNKNOWN SICKNESS, MIGHTY ONE... EVEN THE SUN-GODDESS COULD NOT SAVE YOU...
BUT THAT TRIGAN GIRL HAS CURED YOU WITH HER STRANGE ARTS!
THEN THE CHIEFTAINESS'S COMMANDING EYES WERE UPON SALVIA.
I GRANT YOU YOUR LIFE AND YOUR FREEDOM, AND THE LIFE AND FREEDOM OF YOUR COMPANION. AND ONE OTHER REQUEST... NAME IT!
WE ASK TO BE ESCORTED TO THE SEA OF AZOV!
ALMARA AGREED. SO IT WAS THAT THE TWO TRIGANS RODE SAFELY THROUGH THE VAST, TRACKLESS WILDERNESS WITH A STRONG ESCORT OF TAMAZ WARRIORS.
AND WHEN WE REACH THE SEA... WHAT THEN?
SOMEHOW WE MUST FIND THE GALLEY IN WHICH TRIGO AND THE OTHERS ARE SLAVING AT THE OAR-BENCHES.
THEY CAME AT LENGTH TO A NARROW STRAIT OF WATER THAT DIVIDED THE TWO PARTS OF THE GREAT INLAND SEA, AND THERE THE TAMAZ LEFT THEM.
ALL THE SHIPS THAT SAIL THE SEA OF AZOV MUST PASS THIS POINT. YOU WILL EASILY FIND ONE TO TAKE YOU FARTHER ON YOUR JOURNEY. FAREWELL!

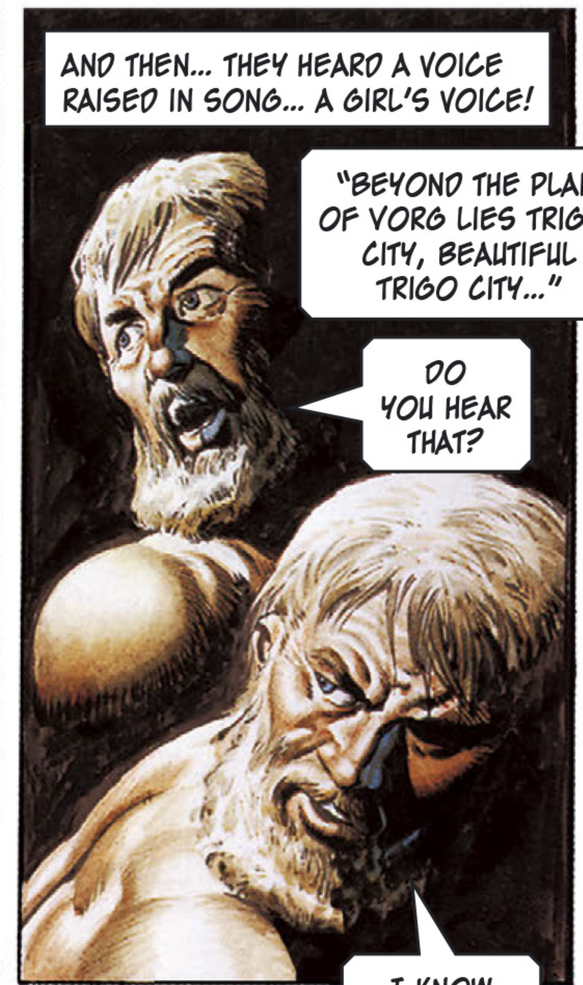

THEY WALKED TO THE TIP OF THE POINT, AND AS SALVIA DESCRIBED THE SCENE TO HER BLIND COMPANION, A DESPERATE PLAN FORMED IN HER MIND...
THERE ARE SHIPS ANCHORED HERE, AND SMALL BOATS SURROUND THEM, SELLING FRUIT AND VEGETABLES TO THE CREWS. BY THE STARS, KEREN! THAT'S OUR ANSWER!
SALVIA! YOU MEAN?
THEY HAD BROUGHT A SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY FROM TRIGAN CITY. LATER THAT DAY, THEY PURCHASED A BOAT FROM ONE OF THE LOCAL TRADERS...
YOU DRIVE A HARD BARGAIN, MY FRIEND.
AH, BUT IT IS A GOOD BOAT, AND NOW I AM TOO OLD FOR PULLING ON THE OAR, I NEED THE MONEY TO PROVIDE FOR MY LAST YEARS. AND YOU CAN HAVE THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES FOR NOTHING.
SOON AFTER, THE TWO COMRADES SET OFF FOR THE ANCHORAGE... WITH KEREN AT THE OAR.
TELL ME IF I AM GOING STRAIGHT, SALVIA.
KEEP GOING AS YOU ARE, KEREN. THERE'S ANOTHER SHIP APPROACHING... A LARGE GALLEY. IT COULD BE THE VERY ONE WE SEEK!
THE HUGE OAR-POWERED GALLEY SLOWED TO A STOP NEAR THE POINT AND DROPPED ANCHOR. VILLAINOUS FACES PEERED DOWN AT THE SMALL BOAT, AND SALVIA REALISED WITH A THRILL OF ALARM THAT THESE MUST INDEED BE PHONIC PIRATES...
YOU WISH TO BUY FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES, SIRS? NOTHING BUT THE BEST!
WE'LL HAVE ALL YOU'VE GOT, GIRL. AND IT HAD BETTER BE FRESH, OR YOU AND YOUR BROTHER WILL SUFFER!
THE BASKETS WERE HAULED UP TO THE PIRATE GALLEY, AND WHILE THIS WAS HAPPENING, SALVIA'S VOICE ROSE IN A SONG...
BEYOND THE PLAIN OF VORG LIES TRIGAN CITY, BEAUTIFUL TRIGAN CITY... AND THAT'S WHERE I LONG TO BE...
SHE SANG A SENTIMENTAL BALLAD MUCH LOVED BY TRIGANS.
IN EXCHANGE, THE PIRATES TOSSED THEM A FEW COINS. THEIR BUSINESS TRANSACTED, KEREN PULLED AWAY FROM THE GALLEY.
NO LUCK THERE, SALVIA!
NO, KEREN. IF TRIGO, BRAG AND JANNO HAD BEEN ABOARD THEY WOULD HAVE HEARD MY SONG AND JOINED IN, FOR THEY WOULD HAVE RECOGNISED MY VOICE. BUT WE MAY BE LUCKIER NEXT TIME...
KEREN'S VOICE ROSE IN DESPAIR...
WHAT'S THE USE? EVEN IF WE FIND THE GALLEY THAT ENSLAVES THEM, WHAT CAN WE DO? A GIRL AND A BLIND BOY?
FIRST LET US FIND THEM, KEREN. THEN WE'LL THINK OF SOME WAY TO RESCUE THEM.
BUT IN HER HEART, SALVIA REALISED THE HOPELESSNESS OF THE TASK THEY HAD SET THEMSELVES!

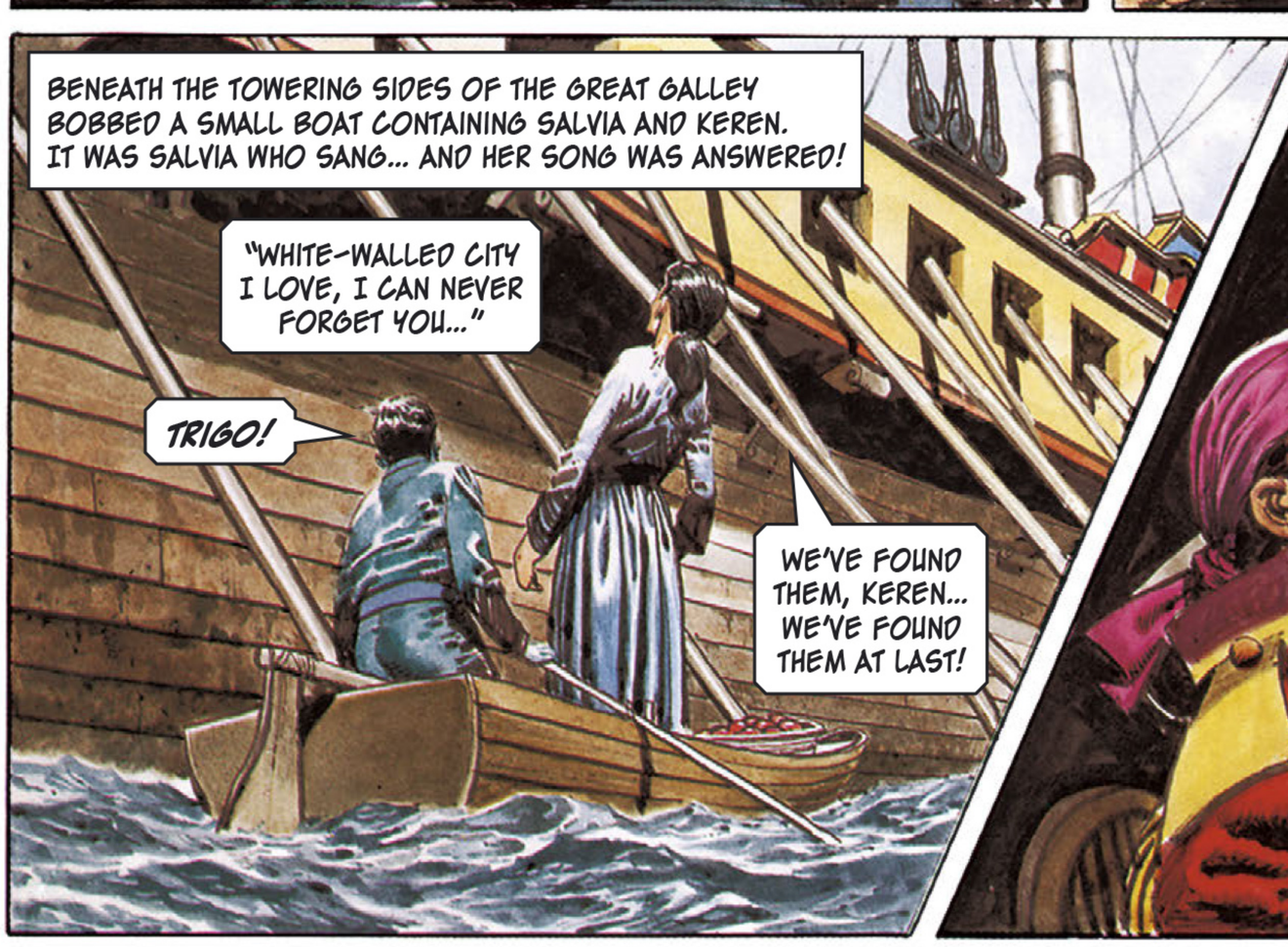
DAS KASSA WAS A HAPPY MAN. WAS HE NOT THE CAPTAIN OF THE FINEST PIRATE GALLEY IN THE SEA OF AZOV? FRESH FROM A RAID WHICH HAD FILLED THE HOLDS WITH PRICELESS LOOT.
SLOW THE BEAT AND PREPARE TO COME TO ANCHOR! WE'LL STAY HERE FOR A NIGHT OF FEASTING AND REJOICING!

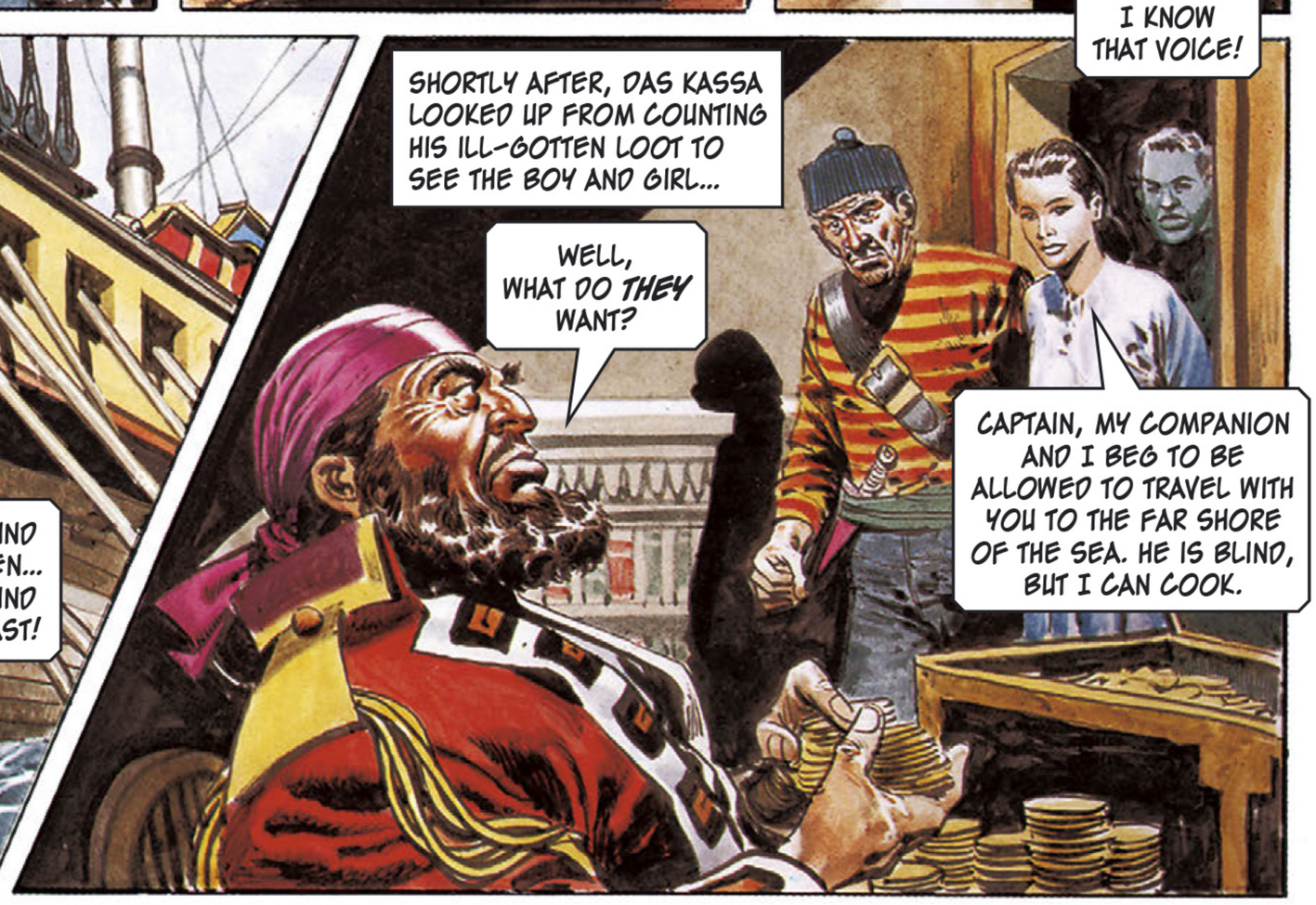

OBEDIENT TO THE DRUM BEAT, THE OARS SLOWED THEIR STROKE. AND THE GREAT SHIP GLIDED TOWARDS THE ANCHORAGE.

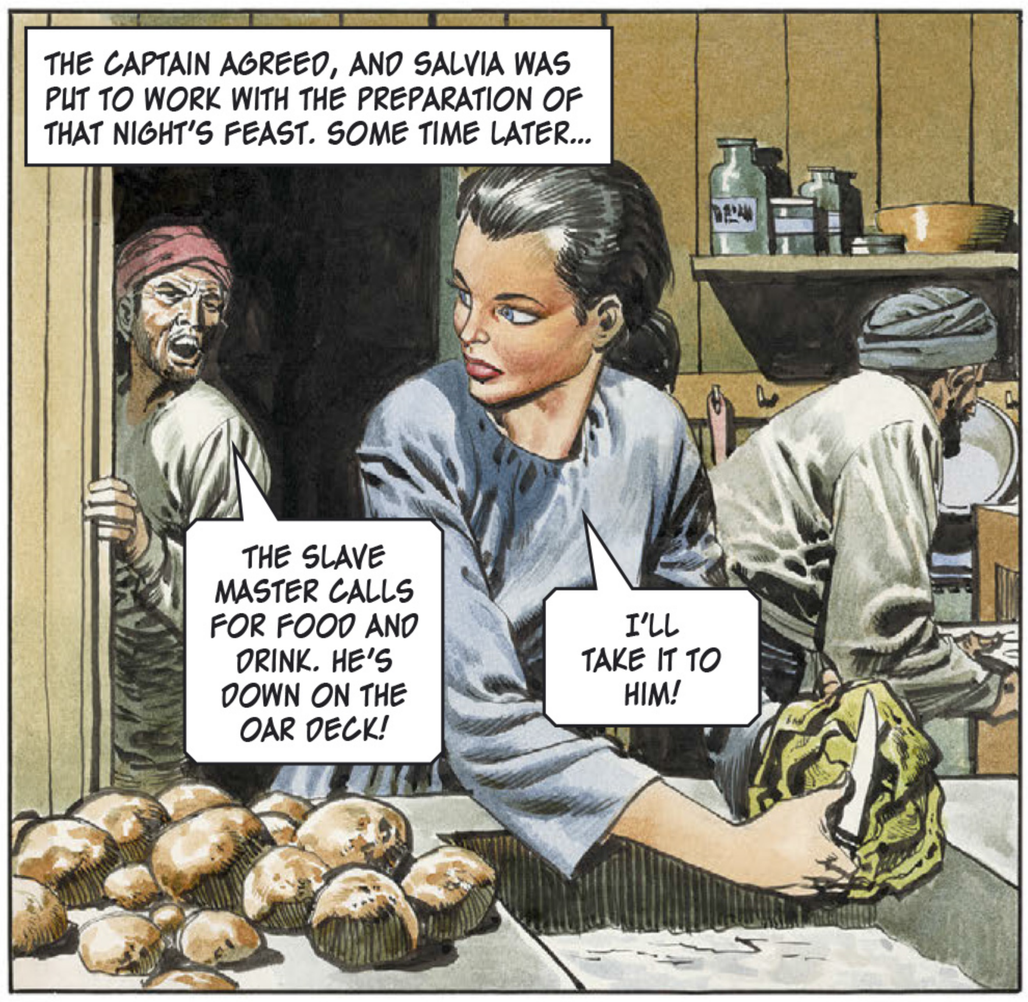
WHEN THE ANCHOR SPLASHED DOWN, THE WEARY SLAVES BOWED, PANTING, OVER THEIR OARS...
JANNO!
THE LAD WON'T LAST MUCH LONGER, TRIGO!

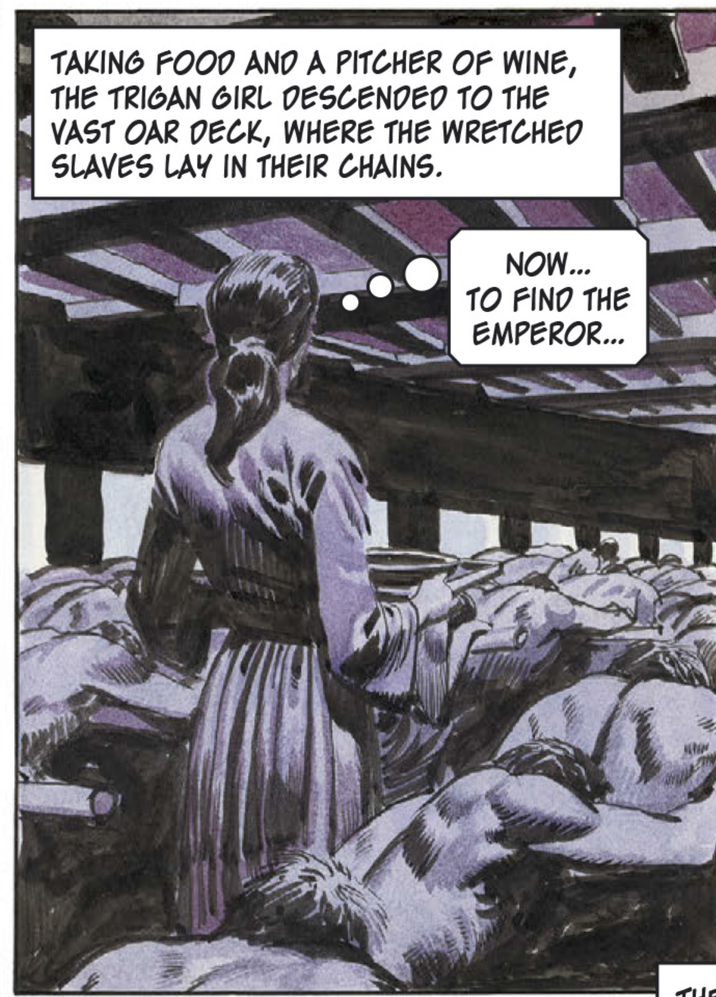

THE ENSLAVED EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS NODDED GRIMLY.
ANOTHER LONG SPELL AT THE OAR WILL KILL HIM, BRAG. WE'VE GOT TO ESCAPE!
AYE! BUT HOW?


AND THEN... THEY HEARD A VOICE RAISED IN SONG... A GIRL'S VOICE!
"BEYOND THE PLAIN OF VORG LIES TRIGAN CITY, BEAUTIFUL TRIGO CITY..."
DO YOU HEAR THAT?
I KNOW THAT VOICE!

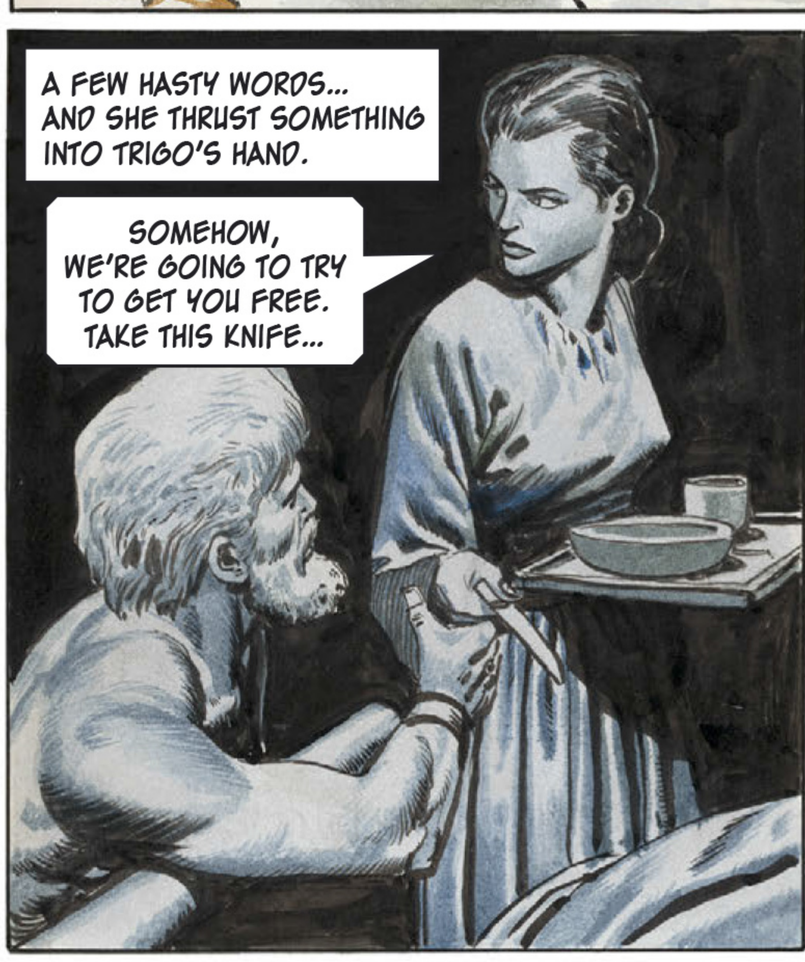

BENEATH THE TOWERING SIDES OF THE GREAT GALLEY BOBBED A SMALL BOAT CONTAINING SALVIA AND KEREN. IT WAS SALVIA WHO SANG... AND HER SONG WAS ANSWERED!
"WHITE-WALLED CITY I LOVE, I CAN NEVER FORGET YOU..."
TRIGO!
WE'VE FOUND THEM, KEREN... WE'VE FOUND THEM AT LAST!


SHORTLY AFTER, DAS KASSA LOOKED UP FROM COUNTING HIS ILL-GOTTEN LOOT TO SEE THE BOY AND GIRL...
WELL, WHAT DO THEY WANT?
CAPTAIN, MY COMPANION AND I BEG TO BE ALLOWED TO TRAVEL WITH YOU TO THE FAR SHORE OF THE SEA. HE IS BLIND, BUT I CAN COOK.


THE CAPTAIN AGREED, AND SALVIA WAS PUT TO WORK WITH THE PREPARATION OF THAT NIGHT'S FEAST. SOME TIME LATER...
THE SLAVE MASTER CALLS FOR FOOD AND DRINK. HE'S DOWN ON THE OAR DECK!
I'LL TAKE IT TO HIM!


TAKING FOOD AND A PITCHER OF WINE, THE TRIGAN GIRL DESCENDED TO THE VAST OAR DECK, WHERE THE WRETCHED SLAVES LAY IN THEIR CHAINS.
NOW... TO FIND THE EMPEROR...

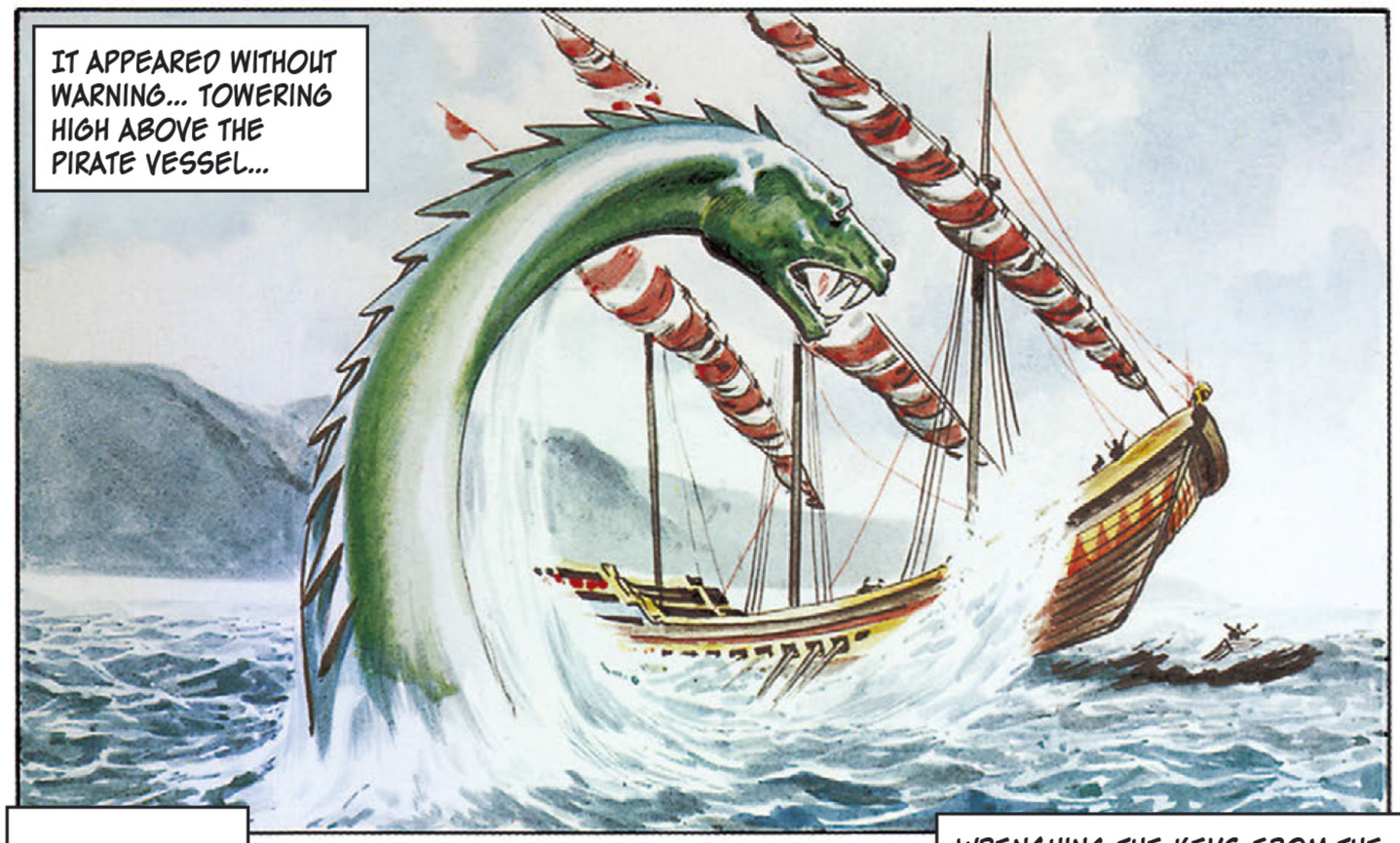
AND THEN...
IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
SALVIA! SO IT WAS YOU!


A FEW HASTY WORDS... AND SHE THRUST SOMETHING INTO TRIGO'S HAND.
SOMEHOW, WE'RE GOING TO TRY TO GET YOU FREE. TAKE THIS KNIFE...

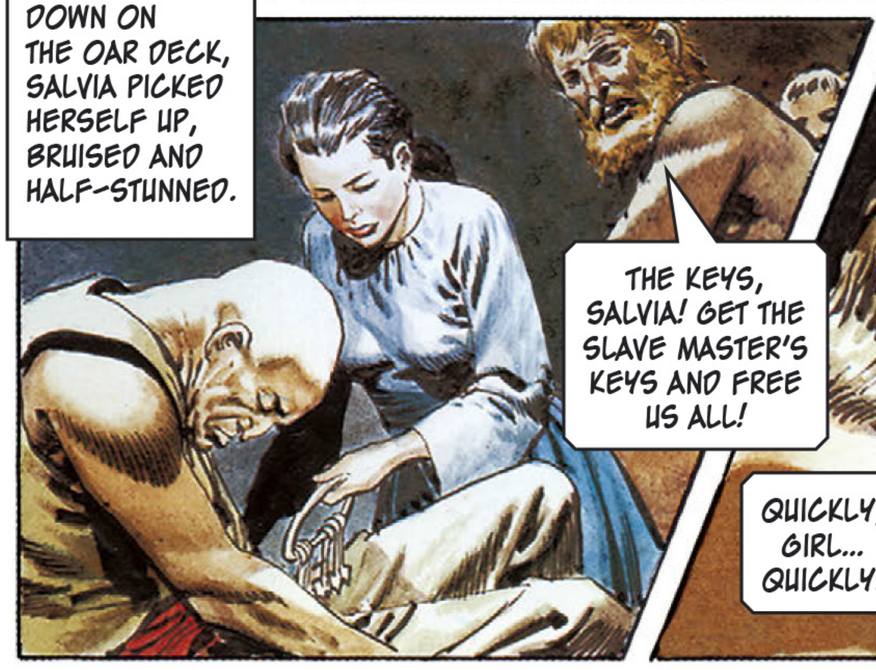
AND THEN... DISASTER!
HEY! YOU! WHAT WAS THAT YOU GAVE THE SLAVE?

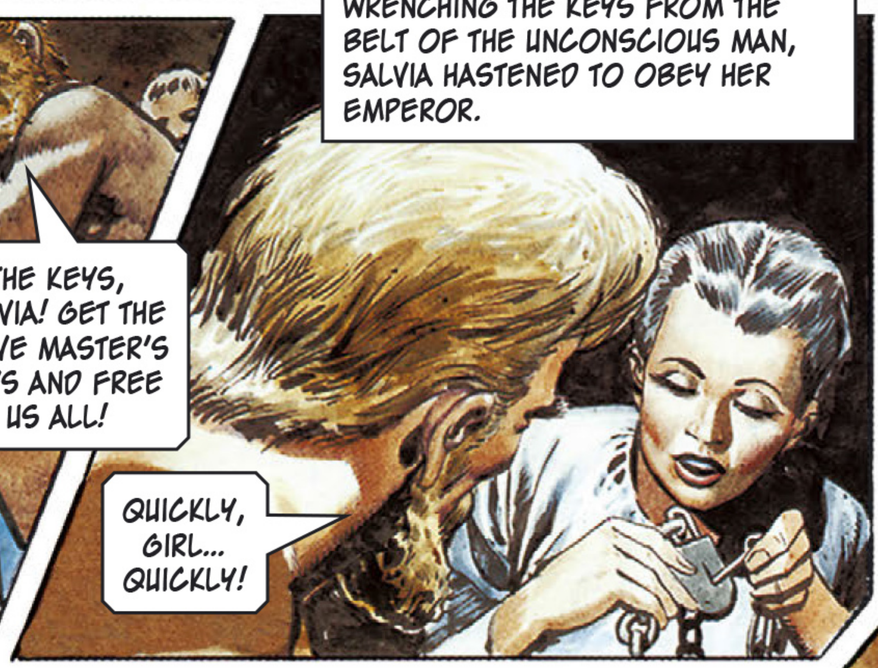
THE SLAVE MASTER SAW THE TELL-TALE WEAPON. IN A TRICE, HE DREW HIS SWORD AND RAISED IT ON HIGH ABOVE THE HELPLESS GIRL.
BY ALL THE STARS! YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT!

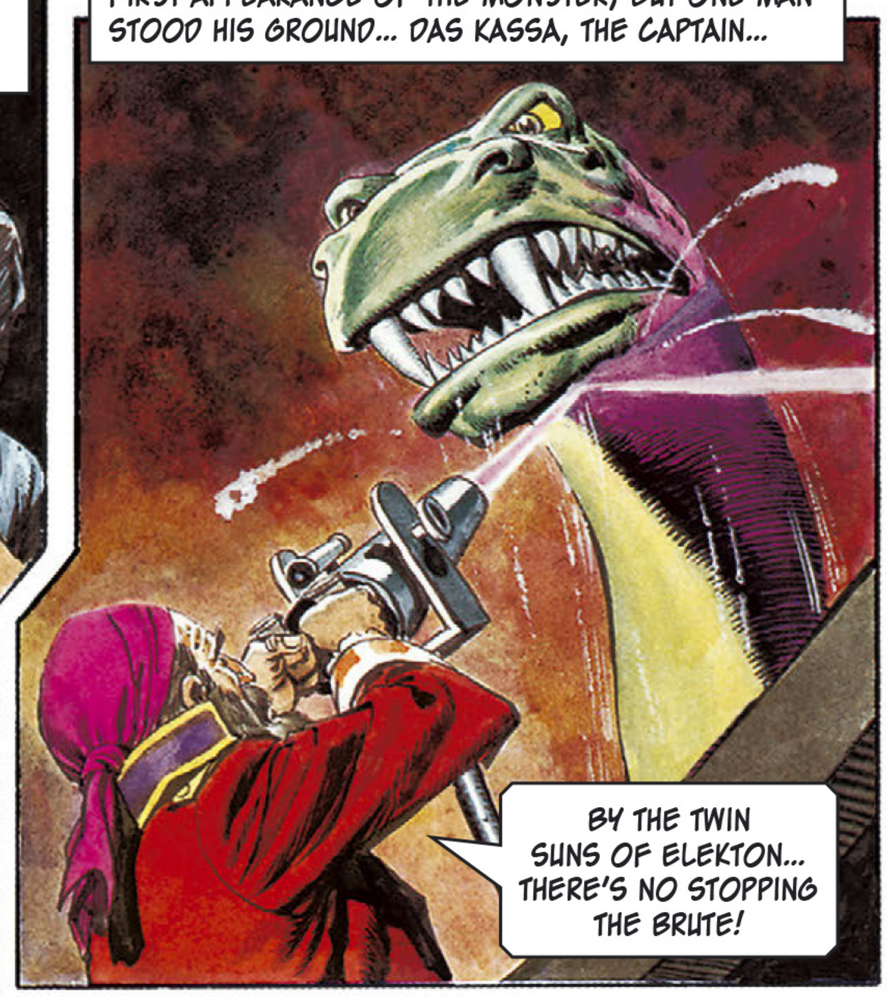
BUT THE BLOW NEVER FELL... INSTEAD, THE BRUTE FELL BACKWARDS AMONGST THE OARSMEN AS THE SHIP LURCHED SICKENINGLY – AND OUTSIDE A NEW HORROR THREATENED TO ENGULF THEM ALL...

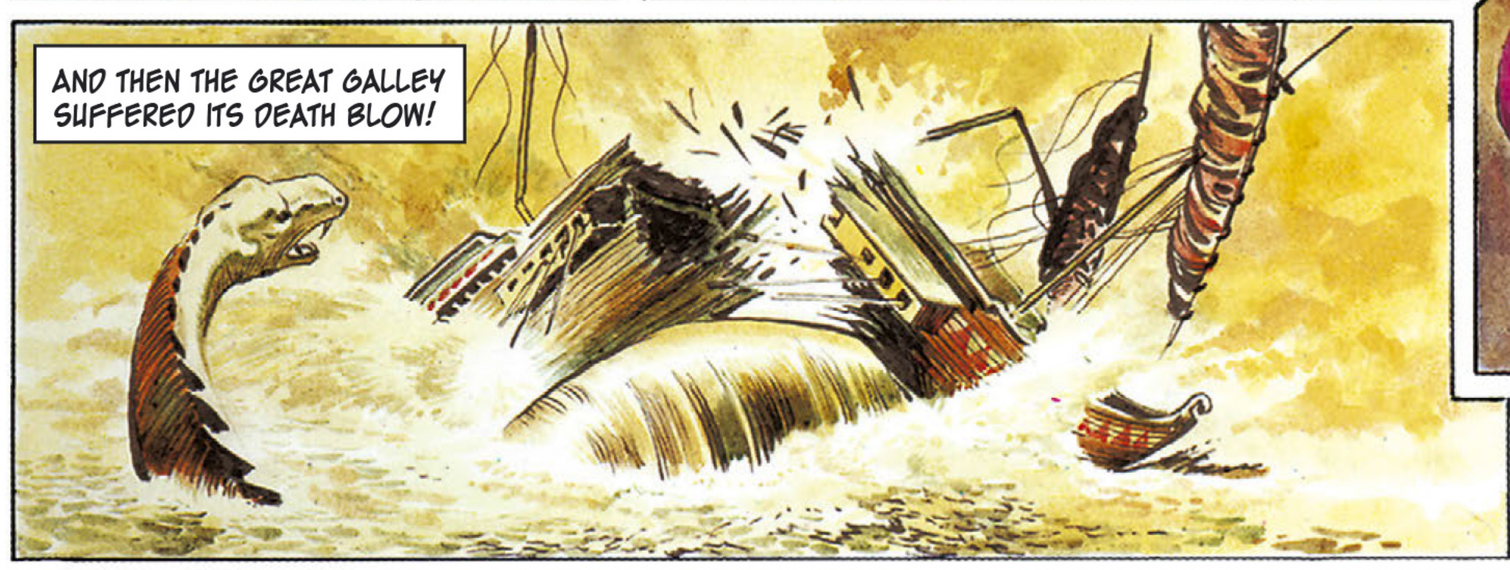

IT APPEARED WITHOUT WARNING... TOWERING HIGH ABOVE THE PIRATE VESSEL...

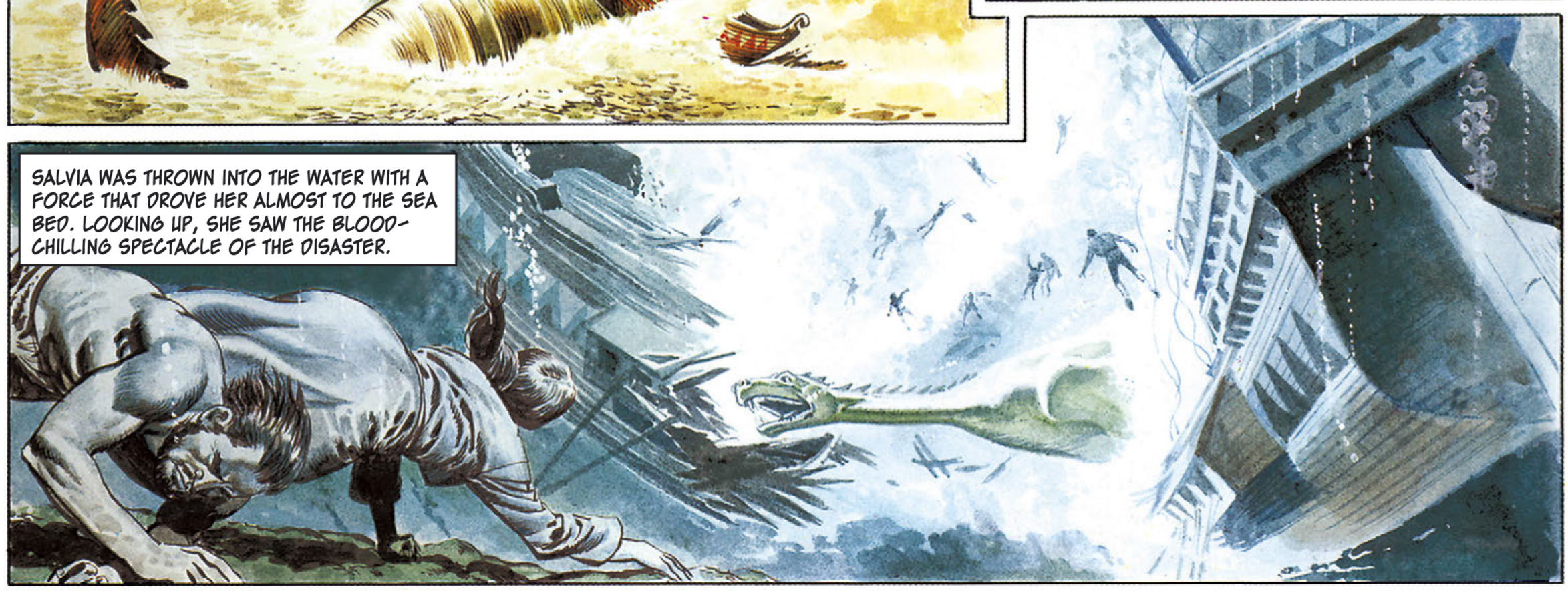
ITS MASSIVE TAIL FLAILED ROUND, AND THE GALLEY WAS ALL BUT OVERTURNED BY A MIGHTY WALL OF WATER.


DOWN ON THE OAR DECK, SALVIA PICKED HERSELF UP, BRUISED AND HALF-STUNNED.
THE KEYS, SALVIA! GET THE SLAVE MASTER'S KEYS AND FREE US ALL!

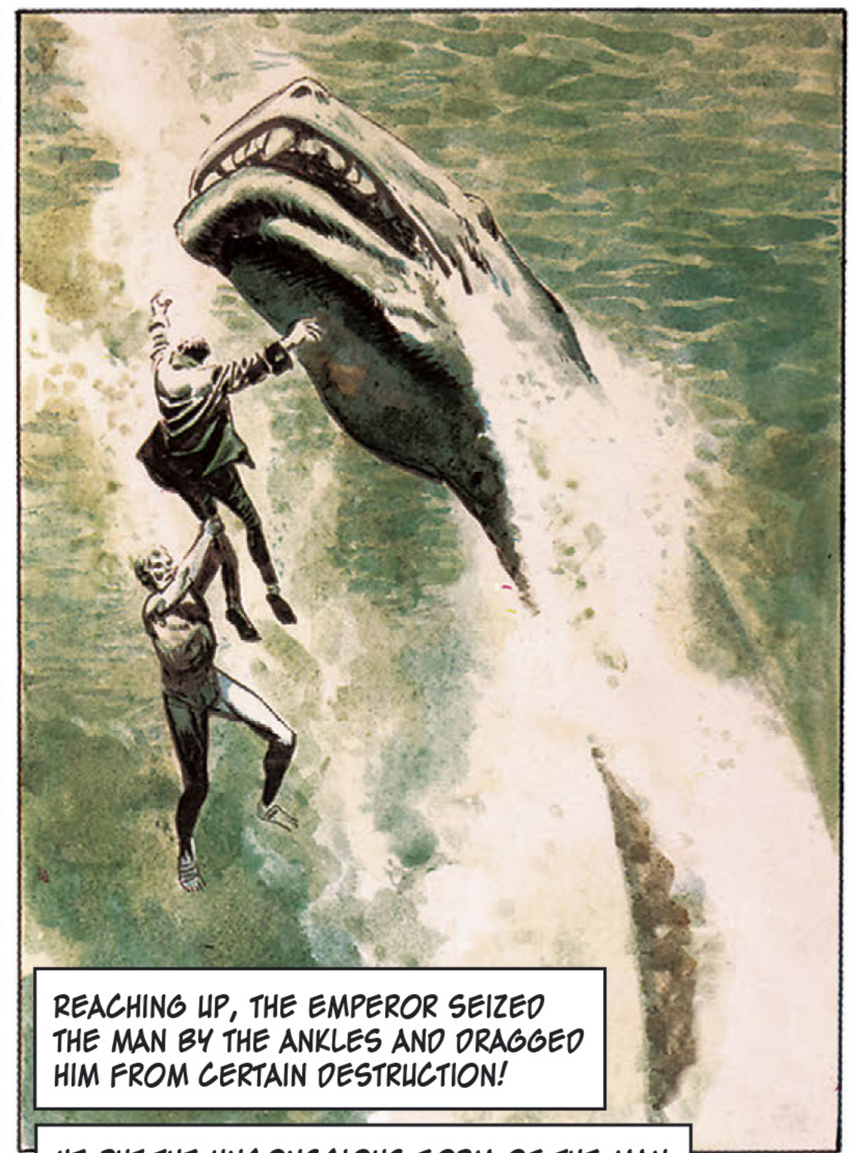

WRENCHING THE KEYS FROM THE BELT OF THE UNCONSCIOUS MAN, SALVIA HASTENED TO OBEY HER EMPEROR.
QUICKLY, GIRL... QUICKLY!

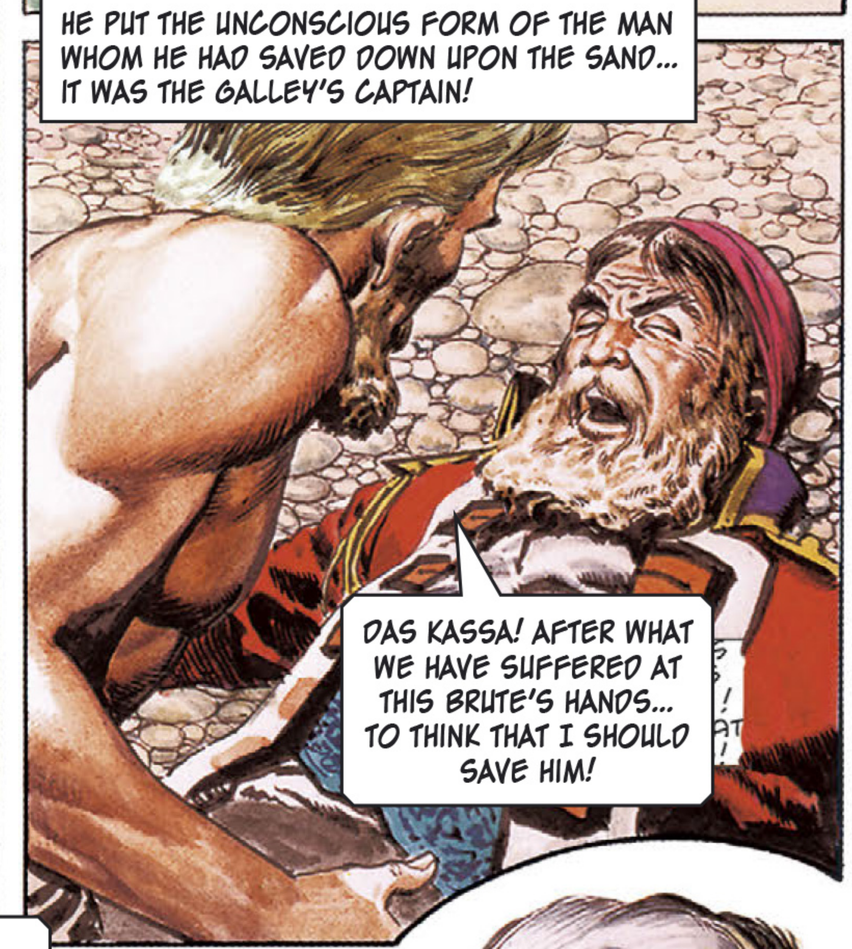

MANY OF THE PIRATES HAD LEAPT OVERBOARD AT THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE MONSTER, BUT ONE MAN STOOD HIS GROUND... DAS KASSA, THE CAPTAIN...
BY THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON... THERE'S NO STOPPING THE BRUTE!

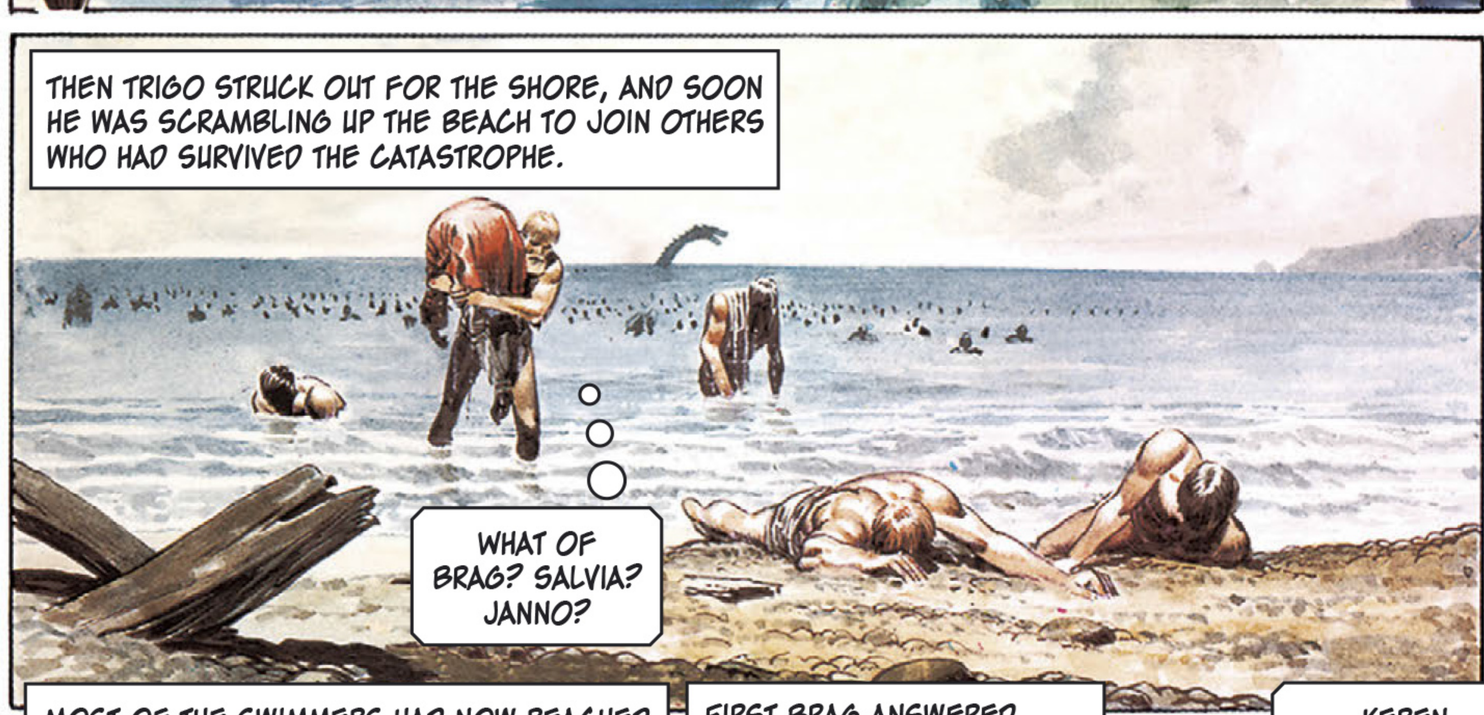

AND THEN THE GREAT GALLEY SUFFERED ITS DEATH BLOW!

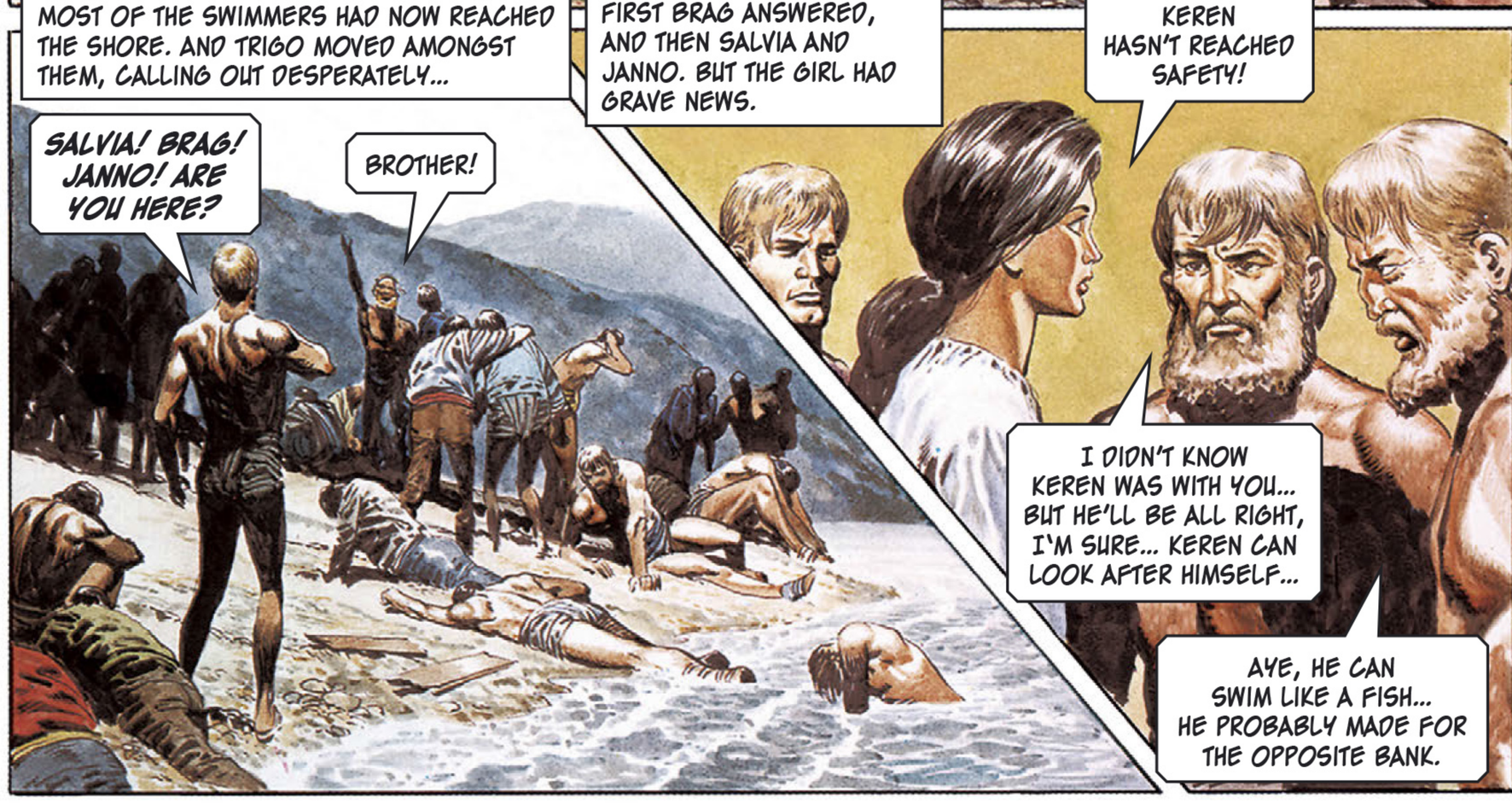

SALVIA WAS THROWN INTO THE WATER WITH A FORCE THAT DROVE HER ALMOST TO THE SEA BED. LOOKING UP, SHE SAW THE BLOOD-CHILLING SPECTACLE OF THE DISASTER.

FREED OF HIS CHAINS, TRIGO ALSO REACHED THE WATER UNHARMED. KICKING HIS WAY TOWARDS THE SURFACE, HE SAW THE MONSTER'S FEARSOME HEAD FLASHING TOWARDS A LIMP, FLOATING FIGURE JUST ABOVE HIM.
NO... NO!

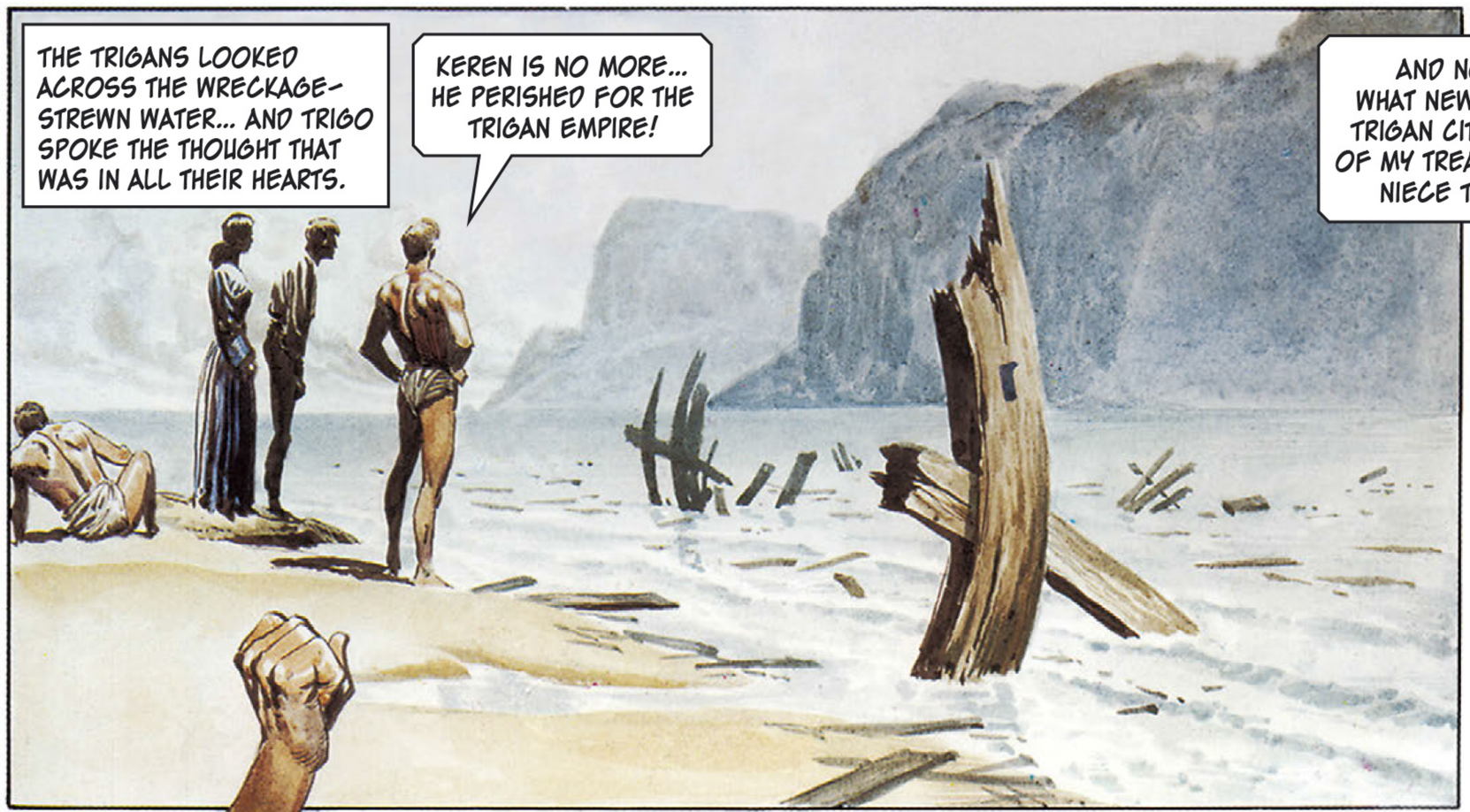

REACHING UP, THE EMPEROR SEIZED THE MAN BY THE ANKLES AND DRAGGED HIM FROM CERTAIN DESTRUCTION!


HE PUT THE UNCONSCIOUS FORM OF THE MAN WHOM HE HAD SAVED DOWN UPON THE SAND... IT WAS THE GALLEY'S CAPTAIN!
DAS KASSA! AFTER WHAT WE HAVE SUFFERED AT THIS BRUTE'S HANDS... TO THINK THAT I SHOULD SAVE HIM!

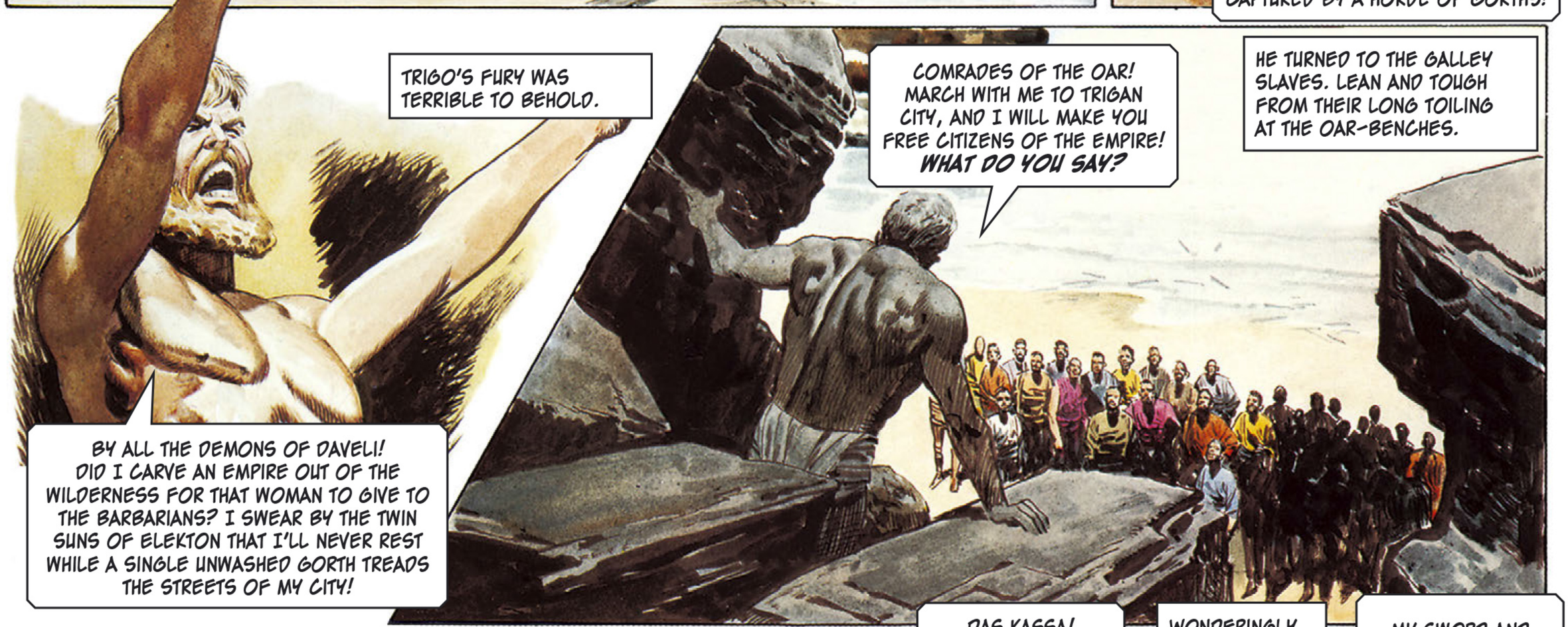

THEN TRIGO STRUCK OUT FOR THE SHORE, AND SOON HE WAS SCRAMBLING UP THE BEACH TO JOIN OTHERS WHO HAD SURVIVED THE CATASTROPHE.
WHAT OF BRAG? SALVIA? JANNO?

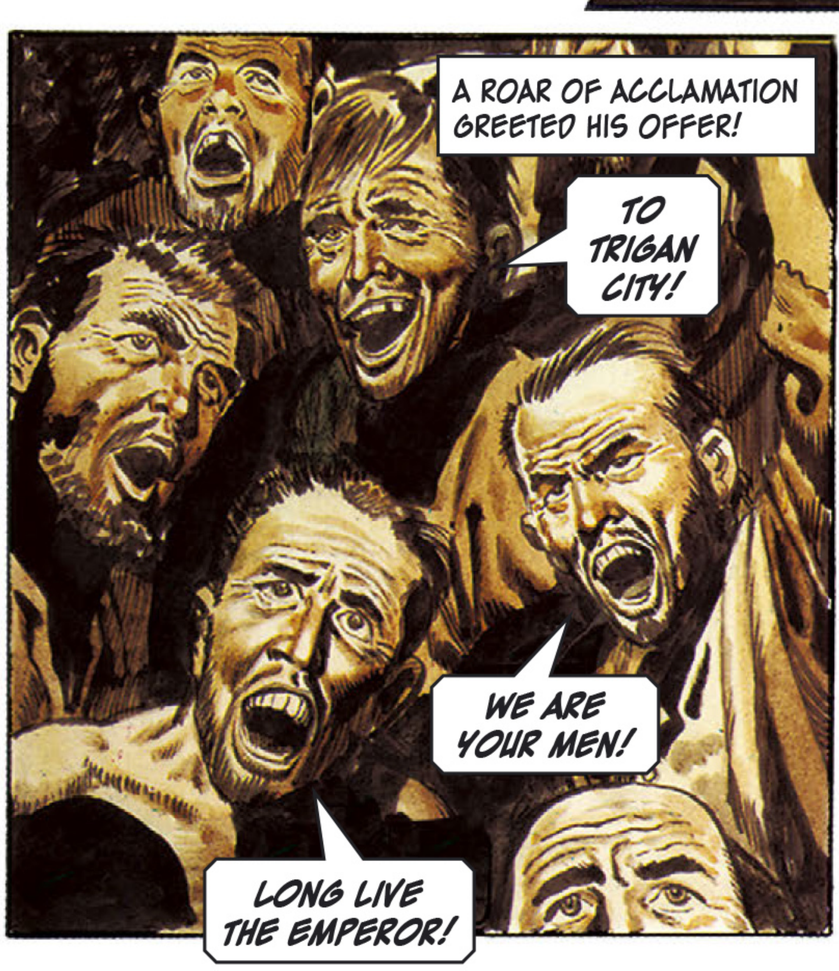

MOST OF THE SWIMMERS HAD NOW REACHED THE SHORE. AND TRIGO MOVED AMONGST THEM, CALLING OUT DESPERATELY...
SALVIA! BRAG! JANNO! ARE YOU HERE?
BROTHER!
FIRST BRAG ANSWERED, AND THEN SALVIA AND JANNO. BUT THE GIRL HAD GRAVE NEWS.
KEREN HASN'T REACHED SAFETY!
I DIDN'T KNOW KEREN WAS WITH YOU... BUT HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT, I'M SURE... KEREN CAN LOOK AFTER HIMSELF...
AYE, HE CAN SWIM LIKE A FISH... HE PROBABLY MADE FOR THE OPPOSITE BANK.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND... HE'S BLIND! HOW CAN HE LOOK AFTER HIMSELF?


THE TRIGANS LOOKED ACROSS THE WRECKAGE-STREWN WATER... AND TRIGO SPOKE THE THOUGHT THAT WAS IN ALL THEIR HEARTS.
KEREN IS NO MORE... HE PERISHED FOR THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

AND NOW... WHAT NEWS FROM TRIGAN CITY? WHAT OF MY TREACHEROUS NIECE THARA?
REMEMBERING HIS STERN DUTY, TRIGO QUENCHED HIS GRIEF AND TURNED TO SALVIA...
THARA CLAIMED THAT YOU AND YOUR HEIRS WERE DEAD. SHE THEN HAD HERSELF CROWNED EMPRESS! IT WAS A SHORT AND DISASTROUS REIGN. THE CITY HAS BEEN CAPTURED BY A HORDE OF GORTHS!


TRIGO'S FURY WAS TERRIBLE TO BEHOLD.
BY ALL THE DEMONS OF DAVELI! DID I CARVE AN EMPIRE OUT OF THE WILDERNESS FOR THAT WOMAN TO GIVE TO THE BARBARIANS? I SWEAR BY THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON THAT I'LL NEVER REST WHILE A SINGLE UNWASHED GORTH TREADS THE STREETS OF MY CITY!
COMRADES OF THE OAR! MARCH WITH ME TO TRIGAN CITY, AND I WILL MAKE YOU FREE CITIZENS OF THE EMPIRE! WHAT DO YOU SAY?
HE TURNED TO THE GALLEY SLAVES. LEAN AND TOUGH FROM THEIR LONG TOILING AT THE OAR-BENCHES.


A ROAR OF ACCLAMATION GREETED HIS OFFER!
TO TRIGAN CITY!
WE ARE YOUR MEN!
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!

AND THEN...
DAS KASSA! WHAT DO YOU WANT, YOU SCOUNDREL?
YOU SAVED MY LIFE, EMPEROR, AND A PIRATE HAS HONOUR OF A SORT... JUST LIKE OTHER MEN...

WONDERINGLY, TRIGO TOOK THE HUGE HAND THAT WAS OFFERED TO HIM.
MY SWORD AND THE SWORDS OF MY MEN... ARE YOURS TO COMMAND, EMPEROR! WE WILL MARCH WITH YOU!
I THANK YOU, CAPTAIN...

SUCH WEAPONS AS HAD BEEN RECOVERED FROM THE DISASTER WERE SHARED OUT BETWEEN THE MOTLEY FORCE, AND THEY PREPARED TO MOVE OFF. IT WAS THEN THAT JANNO AND SALVIA APPROACHED TRIGO.

IMPERIAL MAJESTY, UNCLE TRIGO... SALVIA AND I HAVE A REQUEST TO MAKE...

WELL?

WE WANT TO STAY AND MAKE A LAST SEARCH FOR KEREN... GIVE US TWO DAYS, UNCLE... JUST TWO DAYS!

AGREED! TAKE TWO DAYS AND NO LONGER... AND THEN FOLLOW AFTER US.

LATER, SALVIA AND JANNO WATCHED THE SMALL ARMY SET OFF ACROSS THE PLAIN TOWARDS DISTANT TRIGAN CITY.

THEY ARE FEW IN NUMBER TO FACE THE HORDES OF GORTH!

YES, SALVIA... BUT THEY HAVE TRIGO!

THE TWO COMRADES FOUND A SMALL BOAT AMONG THE WRECKAGE ON THE SHORE, WHICH THEY REPAIRED. THEN THEY BEGAN THEIR SEARCH.

LET'S TRY THE FAR SHORE.

YES... AND WATCH OUT FOR THAT MONSTER!

FOR TWO LONG DAYS THEY SCOURED THE SHORES OF THE INLAND SEA. THEY FOUND WRECKAGE IN PLENTY... BUT OF THEIR FRIEND... NOTHING!

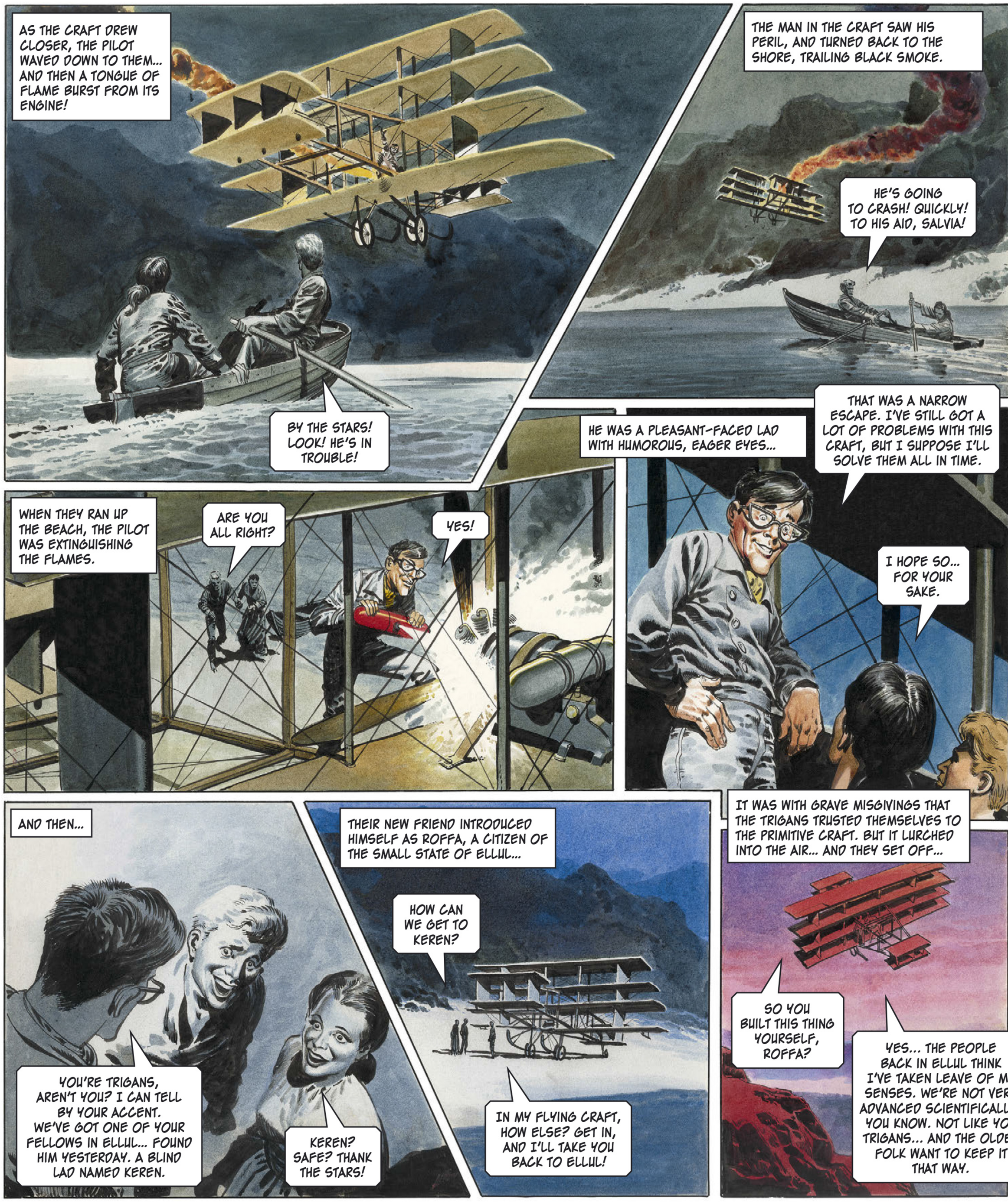
IT'S HOPELESS... AND TOMORROW WE MUST TURN BACK!

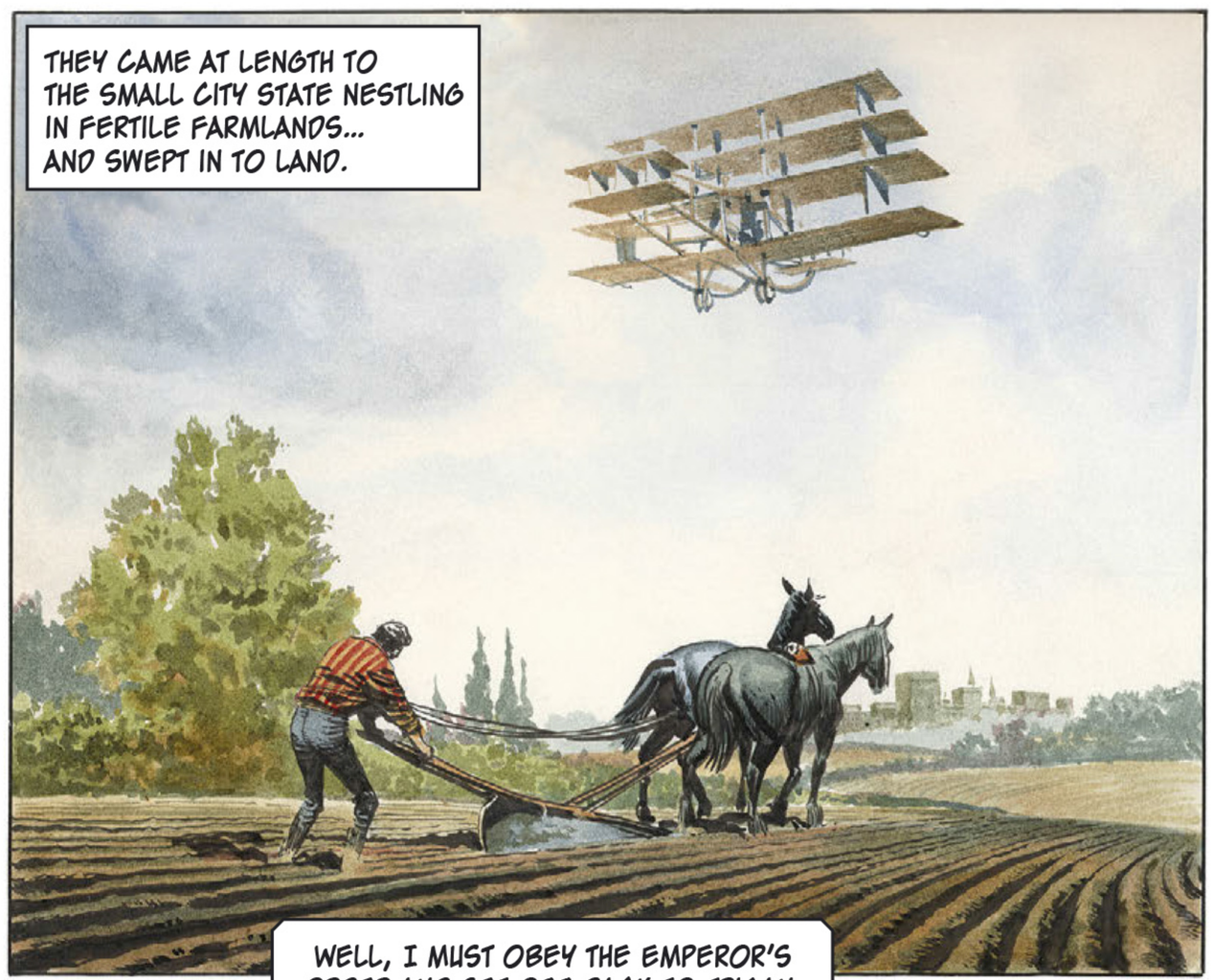
AND THEN... OUT OF THE EVENING SKY... A STRANGE SOUND...

JANNO! LOOK!

BY THE TWIN SUNS!

IT CAME IN LOW OVER THE SHORE... THE STRANGEST CRAFT THAT THE TWO TRIGANS HAD EVER SEEN IN THEIR LIVES.

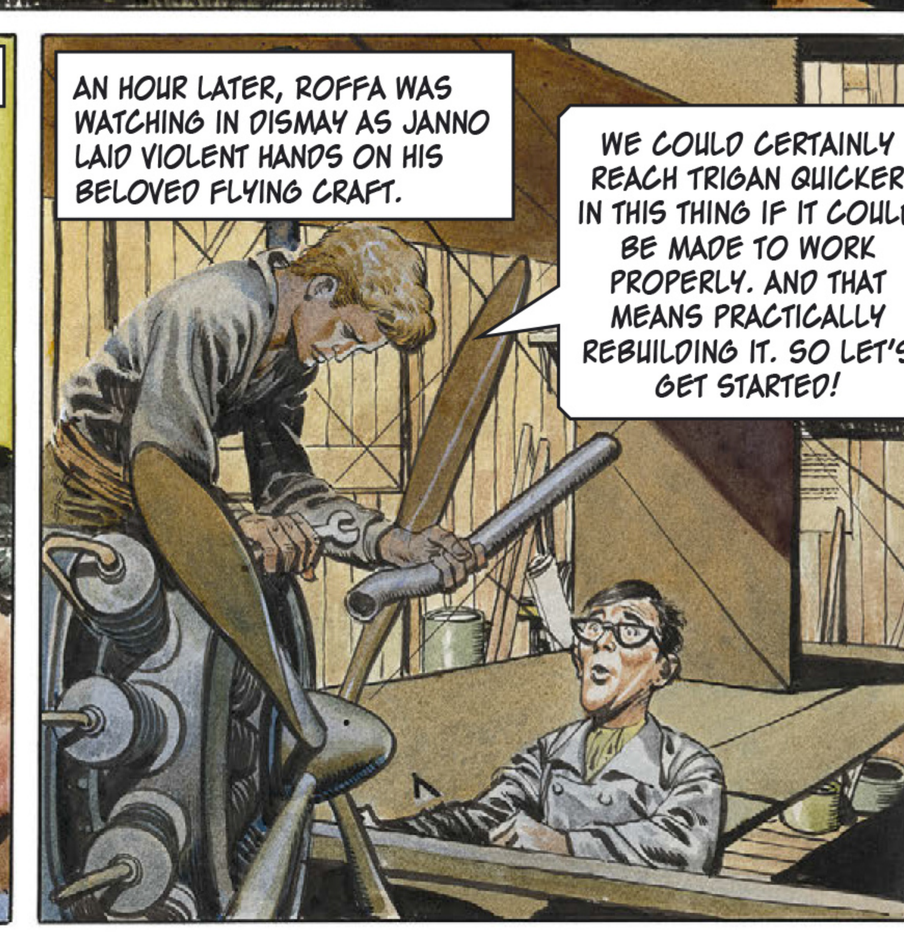

AS THE CRAFT DREW CLOSER, THE PILOT WAVED DOWN TO THEM... AND THEN A TONGUE OF FLAME BURST FROM ITS ENGINE!
BY THE STARS! LOOK! HE'S IN TROUBLE!
THE MAN IN THE CRAFT SAW HIS PERIL, AND TURNED BACK TO THE SHORE, TRAILING BLACK SMOKE.
HE'S GOING TO CRASH! QUICKLY! TO HIS AID, SALVIA!
WHEN THEY RAN UP THE BEACH, THE PILOT WAS EXTINGUISHING THE FLAMES.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES!
HE WAS A PLEASANT-FACED LAD WITH HUMOROUS, EAGER EYES...
THAT WAS A NARROW ESCAPE. I'VE STILL GOT A LOT OF PROBLEMS WITH THIS CRAFT, BUT I SUPPOSE I'LL SOLVE THEM ALL IN TIME.
I HOPE SO... FOR YOUR SAKE.
AND THEN...
YOU'RE TRIGANS, AREN'T YOU? I CAN TELL BY YOUR ACCENT. WE'VE GOT ONE OF YOUR FELLOWS IN ELLUL... FOUND HIM YESTERDAY. A BLIND LAD NAMED KEREN.
KEREN? SAFE? THANK THE STARS!
THEIR NEW FRIEND INTRODUCED HIMSELF AS ROFFA, A CITIZEN OF THE SMALL STATE OF ELLUL...
HOW CAN WE GET TO KEREN?
IN MY FLYING CRAFT, HOW ELSE? GET IN, AND I'LL TAKE YOU BACK TO ELLUL!
IT WAS WITH GRAVE MISGIVINGS THAT THE TRIGANS TRUSTED THEMSELVES TO THE PRIMITIVE CRAFT. BUT IT LURCHED INTO THE AIR... AND THEY SET OFF...
SO YOU BUILT THIS THING YOURSELF, ROFFA?
YES... THE PEOPLE BACK IN ELLUL THINK I'VE TAKEN LEAVE OF MY SENSES. WE'RE NOT VERY ADVANCED SCIENTIFICALLY, YOU KNOW. NOT LIKE YOU TRIGANS... AND THE OLDER FOLK WANT TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.

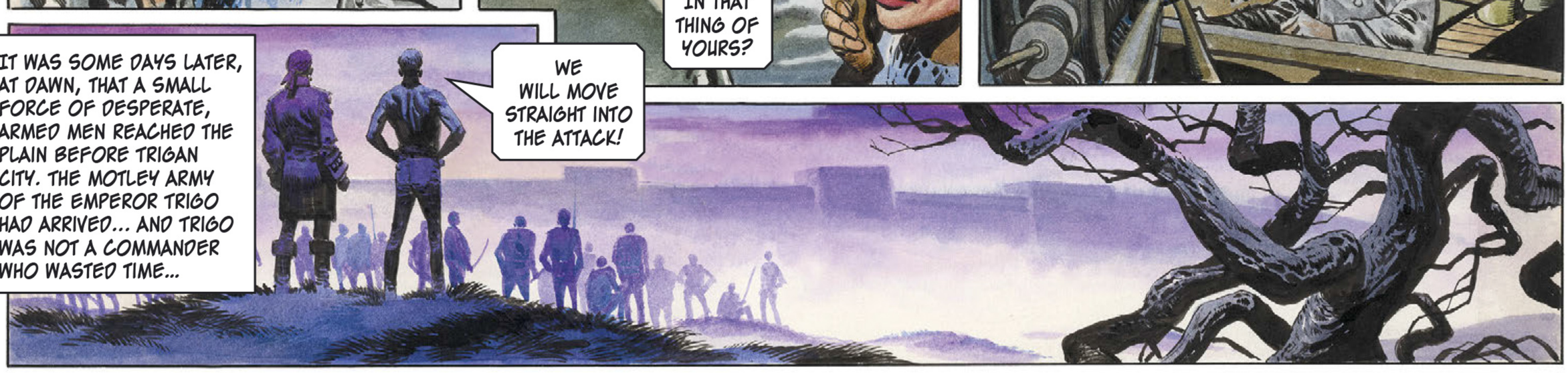

THEY CAME AT LENGTH TO THE SMALL CITY STATE NESTLING IN FERTILE FARMLANDS... AND SWEPT IN TO LAND.

THERE, ROFFA TOOK THEM TO A PHYSICIAN'S HOUSE, WHERE THEY WERE RE-UNITED WITH THEIR COMRADE KEREN...
KEREN... HOW ARE YOU?
MUCH BETTER. THEY'RE VERY KIND TO ME HERE.
HE IS SUFFERING FROM EXHAUSTION AND EXPOSURE, AND WILL NOT BE FIT TO MOVE FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

JANNO PONDERED...
WELL, I MUST OBEY THE EMPEROR'S ORDER AND SET OFF BACK TO TRIGAN. HE'LL NEED EVERY MAN WHO CAN WIELD A SWORD AGAINST THE GORTHS! YOU HAD BETTER STAY HERE TILL KEREN'S FIT TO TRAVEL, THEN FOLLOW LATER...

ROFFA BROKE IN, EAGERLY...
LET ME FLY YOU BACK TO TRIGAN CITY! ALL MY LIFE, I'VE WANTED TO VISIT TRIGAN AND SEE WITH MY OWN EYES YOUR FANTASTIC ATMOSPHERE CRAFT!
IN THAT THING OF YOURS?


AN HOUR LATER, ROFFA WAS WATCHING IN DISMAY AS JANNO LAID VIOLENT HANDS ON HIS BELOVED FLYING CRAFT.
WE COULD CERTAINLY REACH TRIGAN QUICKER IN THIS THING IF IT COULD BE MADE TO WORK PROPERLY. AND THAT MEANS PRACTICALLY REBUILDING IT. SO LET'S GET STARTED!

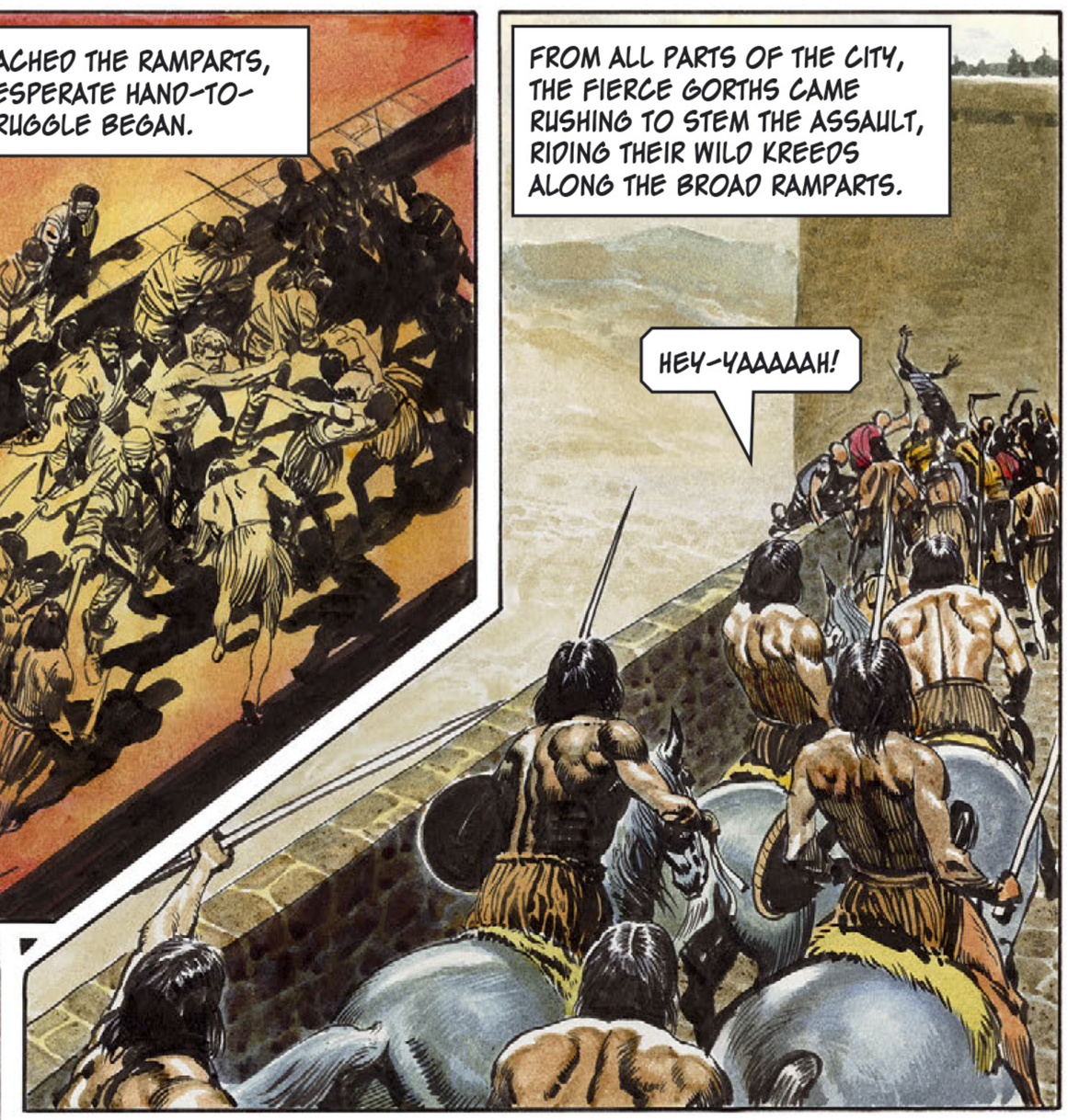

IT WAS SOME DAYS LATER, AT DAWN, THAT A SMALL FORCE OF DESPERATE, ARMED MEN REACHED THE PLAIN BEFORE TRIGAN CITY. THE MOTLEY ARMY OF THE EMPEROR TRIGO HAD ARRIVED... AND TRIGO WAS NOT A COMMANDER WHO WASTED TIME...
WE WILL MOVE STRAIGHT INTO THE ATTACK!

WEAPONS AT THE READY, THE SMALL ARMY CREPT FORWARD TOWARDS THE SLEEPING CITY. THEN – SUDDENLY – THERE WAS A CRASH OF GUNFIRE FROM THE RAMPARTS!
THEY'VE SEEN US! CHARGE!

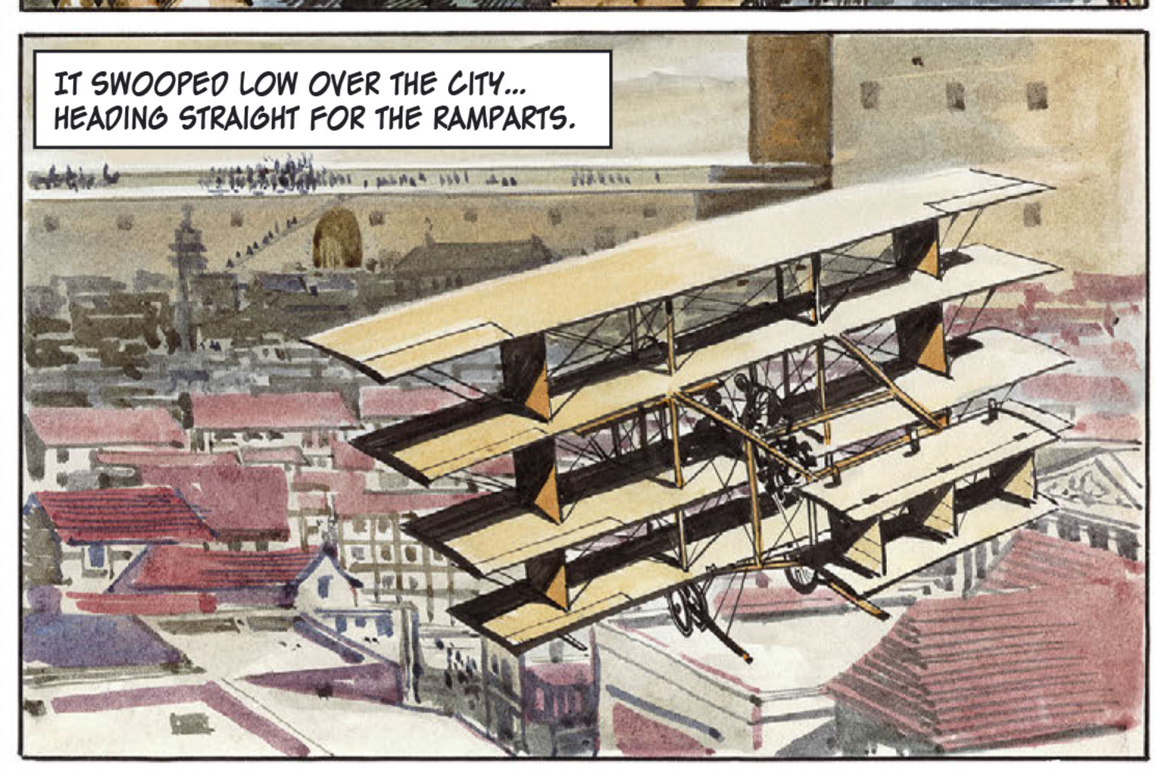
THE SURPRISE ATTACK HAD FAILED. WITH HIS MEN FALLING ALL ROUND HIM, TRIGO CRIED OUT DESPERATELY...
BACK! BACK! BEFORE WE'RE ALL CUT DOWN!
THEY TOOK COVER AMONGST THE BROKEN ROCKS, AND TRIGO HAD A MUTTERED CONVERSATION WITH DAS KASSA.
HOW TO REACH THE TOP OF THE RAMPARTS, THAT'S THE QUESTION... ONCE WE CAN GET WITHIN SWORD LENGTH OF THESE ANIMALS, WE CAN TEACH THEM A LESSON!
THERE IS A WAY... LISTEN...
TRIGO EXPLAINED HIS DESPERATE PLAN. THEN SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, A GIANT GALLEY SLAVE LEAPT FROM COVER AND HURLED A LANCE...
THE MISSILE SLAMMED INTO THE MASSIVE WOODWORK OF THE CITY GATES.
ANOTHER LANCE FOLLOWED... AND ANOTHER...
UUUUGH!
AND THEN...
NOW!
THE EMPEROR WAS THE FIRST TO REACH THE LANCE-STUDDED GATES...

UP THE LADDER OF LANCES SWARMED THE ATTACKERS!

THEY REACHED THE RAMPARTS, AND A DESPERATE HAND-TO-HAND STRUGGLE BEGAN.


FROM ALL PARTS OF THE CITY, THE FIERCE GORTHS CAME RUSHING TO STEM THE ASSAULT, RIDING THEIR WILD KREEDS ALONG THE BROAD RAMPARTS.
HEY-YAAAAAH!

THE ATTACKERS WERE FARING BADLY. TRIGO FOUGHT SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER WITH DAS KASSA, AND THEY WERE BEING DRIVEN, STEP BY STEP, BACK THE WAY THEY HAD COME.
BY THE MOONS OF ELEKTON... HOW MANY MORE OF THESE DEMONS?
TRIGO! LOOK!
SUDDENLY DAS KASSA SAW... SOMETHING...

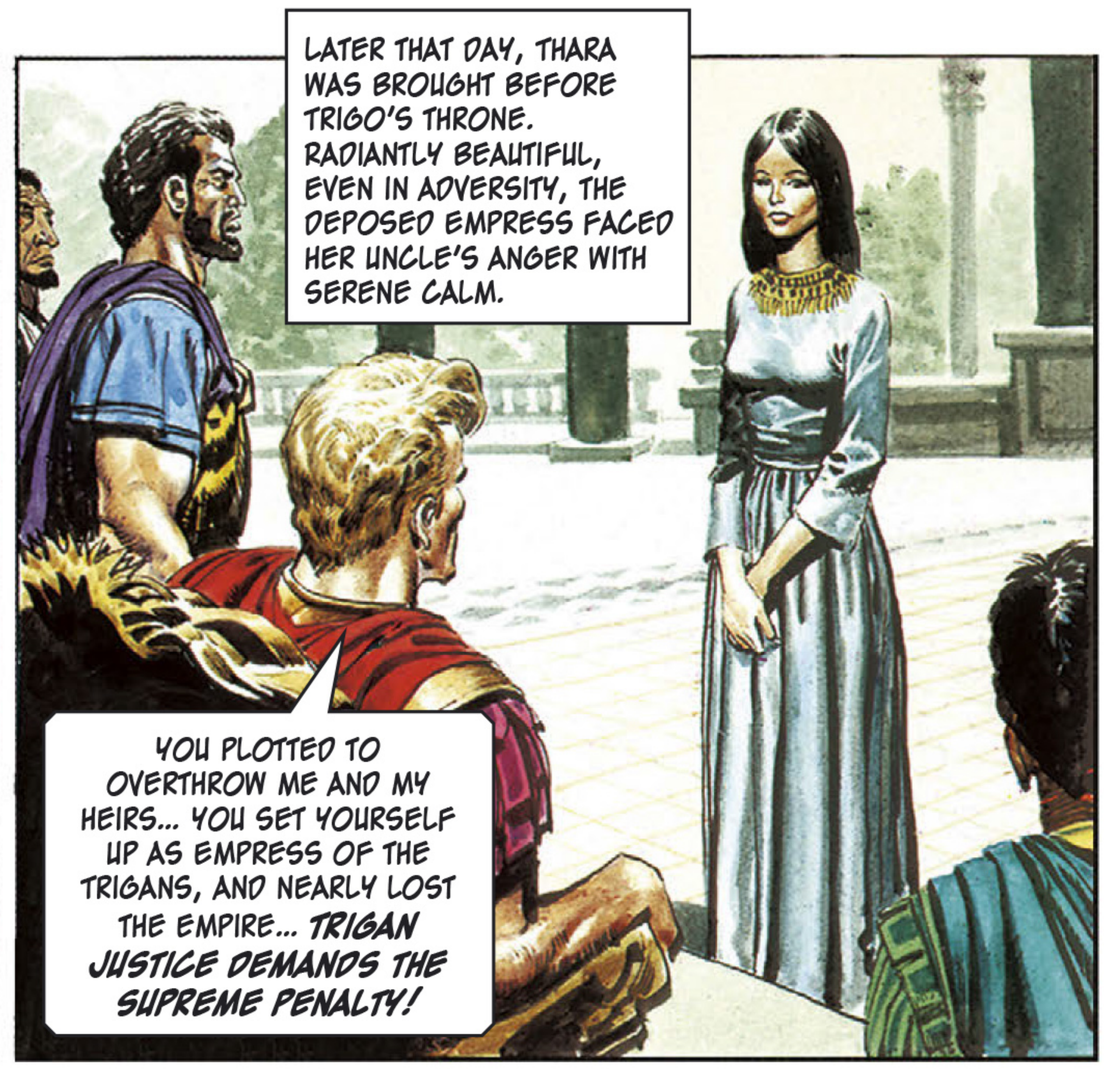

IT SWOOPED LOW OVER THE CITY... HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE RAMPARTS.

JANNO WAS CROUCHED BEHIND ROFFA...
LOWER THE BOULDER, JANNO!

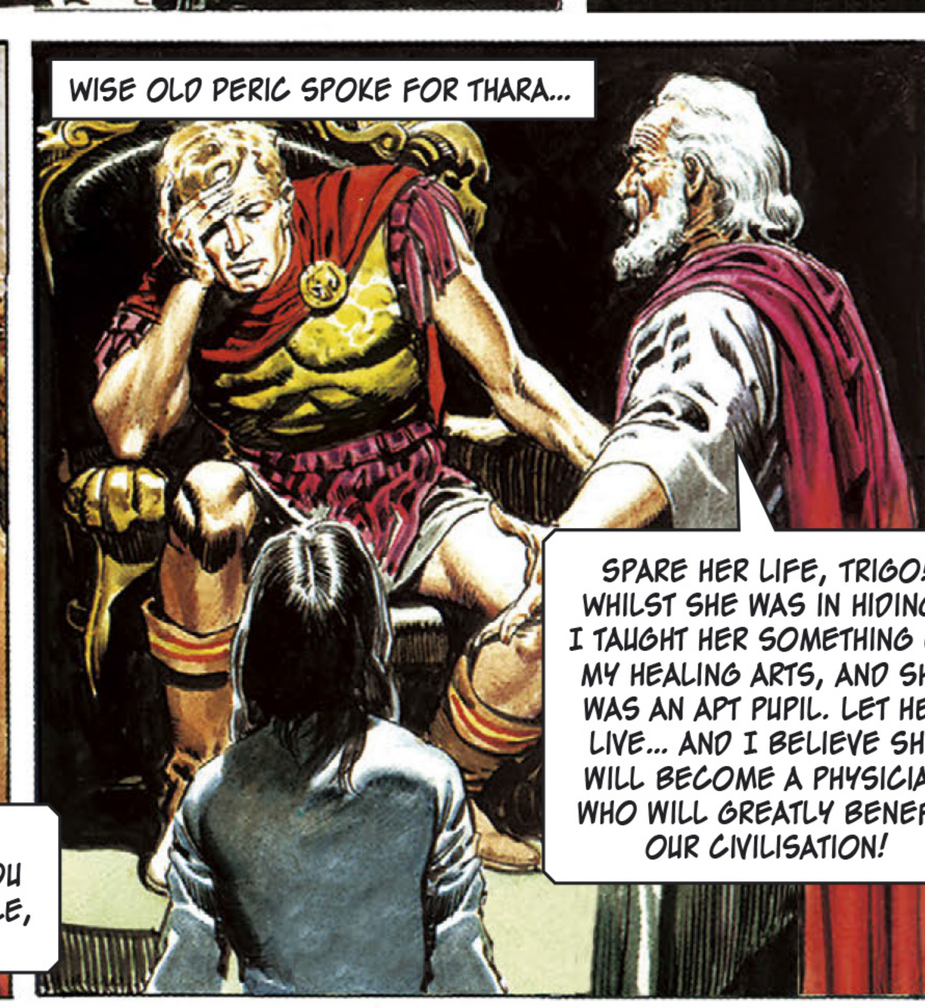
AN INSTANT LATER, A TRAILING HUNK OF ROCK SMASHED INTO THE GORTHS, DASHING THEM FROM THEIR GALLOPING KREEDS!
AAAAAH!

ONCE MORE, ROFFA BROUGHT HIS STRANGE CRAFT SWEEPING LOW... AND THE TRAILING BOULDER WROUGHT HAVOC AMONGST THE GORTHS!
TRIGO WAS SWIFT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION. CALLING TO DAS KASSA, HE LEAPT FROM THE RAMPARTS INTO THE CITY SQUARE BELOW.
DRIVE THEM TOWARDS THE GATES, DAS KASSA! I'LL BE BACK IN THE SPACE OF FIFTY BREATHS!
IN THE CENTRE OF THE SQUARE STOOD A LINE OF ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WHICH HAD NOT BEEN TOUCHED SINCE THE GORTHS TOOK THE CITY, BECAUSE THE BARBARIANS HAD NO TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE. TRIGO RACED TOWARDS THEM, FELLING ALL WHO BARRED HIS WAY.
UUUGH!
INSTANTS LATER, THE EMPEROR WAS AT THE CONTROLS OF A CRAFT AND MAKING A TURN OVER THE RAMPARTS.
NOW TO STRIKE TERROR INTO THE HEARTS OF THE BARBARIANS!
THE GORTHS SAW THE NEW PERIL DESCENDING UPON THEM LIKE AN AVENGING THUNDERBOLT. FLINGING OPEN THE CITY GATES, THEY STREAMED OUT IN A PANIC-STRICKEN MASS!
WE'VE BEATEN THEM, ROFFA! WE'VE BEATEN THEM!
BROKEN AND DEMORALISED, THE PAINTED BARBARIANS FLED ACROSS THE PLAIN OF VORG... URGED ON THEIR WAY BY THE TWO YOUNGSTERS IN THE PRIMITIVE FLYING CRAFT.

THE BATTLE WAS OVER AND TRIGAN REGAINED! WHILST ALL THE BELLS OF THE CITY PEALED OUT IN TRIUMPH, THE PEOPLE SWARMED INTO THE GREAT SQUARE TO SEE THEIR EMPEROR, WHOM THEY HAD THOUGHT TO BE DEAD...
TRIGO LIVES!
THE EMPEROR HAS SAVED US!


LATER THAT DAY, THARA WAS BROUGHT BEFORE TRIGO'S THRONE. RADIANTLY BEAUTIFUL, EVEN IN ADVERSITY, THE DEPOSED EMPRESS FACED HER UNCLE'S ANGER WITH SERENE CALM.
YOU PLOTTED TO OVERTHROW ME AND MY HEIRS... YOU SET YOURSELF UP AS EMPRESS OF THE TRIGANS, AND NEARLY LOST THE EMPIRE... TRIGAN JUSTICE DEMANDS THE SUPREME PENALTY!

IMPERIAL MAJESTY... I BEG FOR MERCY. NOT FOR MYSELF, BUT BECAUSE, ALIVE, I MAY BE OF SOME SMALL USE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE EMPIRE I HAVE SO GRAVELY WRONGED!
INDEED? AND WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR MY PEOPLE, THARA?


WISE OLD PERIC SPOKE FOR THARA...
SPARE HER LIFE, TRIGO! WHILST SHE WAS IN HIDING, I TAUGHT HER SOMETHING OF MY HEALING ARTS, AND SHE WAS AN APT PUPIL. LET HER LIVE... AND I BELIEVE SHE WILL BECOME A PHYSICIAN WHO WILL GREATLY BENEFIT OUR CIVILISATION!

TRIGO THOUGHT FOR A WHILE... AND THEN...
I AGREE! YOU HAVE YOUR LIFE, NIECE! USE IT TO SAVE OTHERS!
THANK YOU... UNCLE!

HAVING DEALT MERCIFULLY WITH HIS NIECE, THE EMPEROR'S THOUGHTS TURNED TO REWARDING THOSE WHO HAD AIDED HIM IN THE DESPERATE VENTURE...
DAS KASSA PRESENTS NO PROBLEM. I HAVE OFFERED TO MAKE HIM AN ADMIRAL AND THE PIRATICAL OLD ROGUE HAS ACCEPTED. BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, ROFFA? IF YOU HADN'T TURNED THE TIDE OF BATTLE WITH YOUR RIDICULOUS FLYING MACHINE, WE NEVER WOULD HAVE REGAINED THE CITY. HOW CAN I REWARD YOU?
UNCLE... IF I MAY BE SO BOLD AS TO MAKE A SUGGESTION?

WHEN HE HEARD HIS REWARD, ROFFA'S SIMPLE COUNTENANCE WAS WREATHED IN A SMILE OF UTTER BLISS...
ME? AN OFFICER OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET! JUST WAIT TILL THE FOLKS BACK IN ELLUL HEAR ABOUT THIS!

WHEN KEREN RETURNED FROM ELLUL, HE WAS CURED OF HIS BLINDNESS BY PERIC'S HEALING ARTS, AND TOOK HIS PLACE ONCE MORE IN THE RANKS OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET WITH JANNO AND ROFFA. AS FOR ROFFA'S PRIMITIVE CRAFT. IT BECAME A PERMANENT MEMORIAL TO THE SAVING OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

XIII

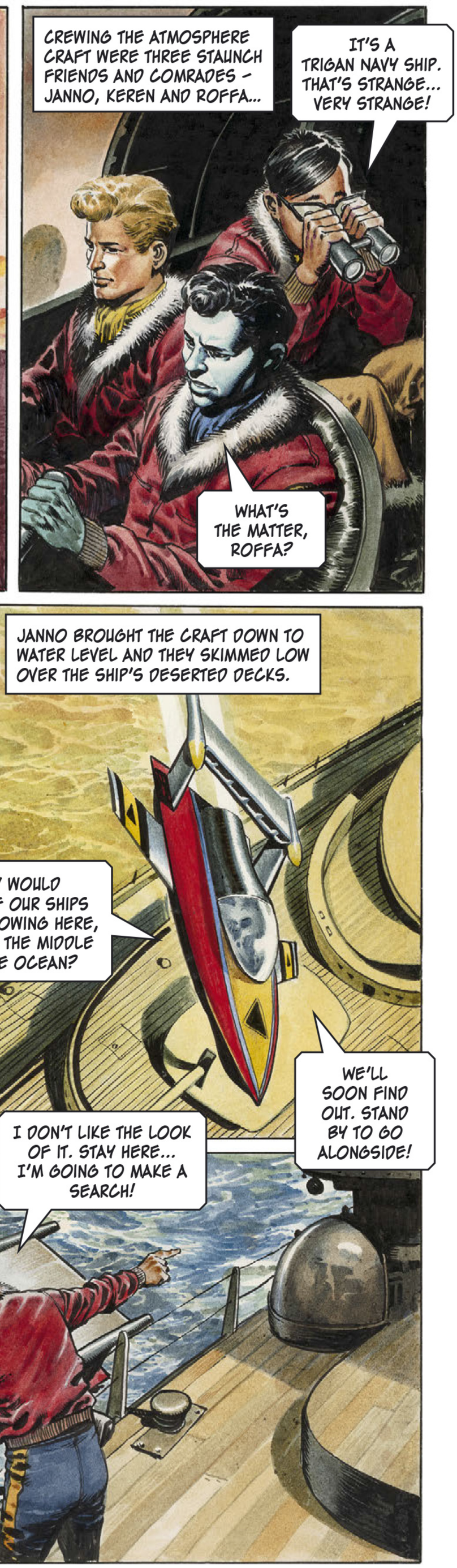
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE INVASION OF BOLUS

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 317 – 331

10th February – 17th May 1968

THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON WERE DIPPING TOWARDS THE HORIZON AS A CRAFT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET STREAKED HIGH OVER THE OCEAN ON WHAT WAS A ROUTINE PATROL.
SURFACE CRAFT AHEAD!
IT'S STOPPED IN THE WATER... AND I SEE NO SIGN OF LIFE ON THE DECKS!
THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT SPLASHED DOWN ALONGSIDE THE SHIP AND ROFFA CLAMBERED ON TO THE DECK.
HEY! IS ANYONE ABOARD?

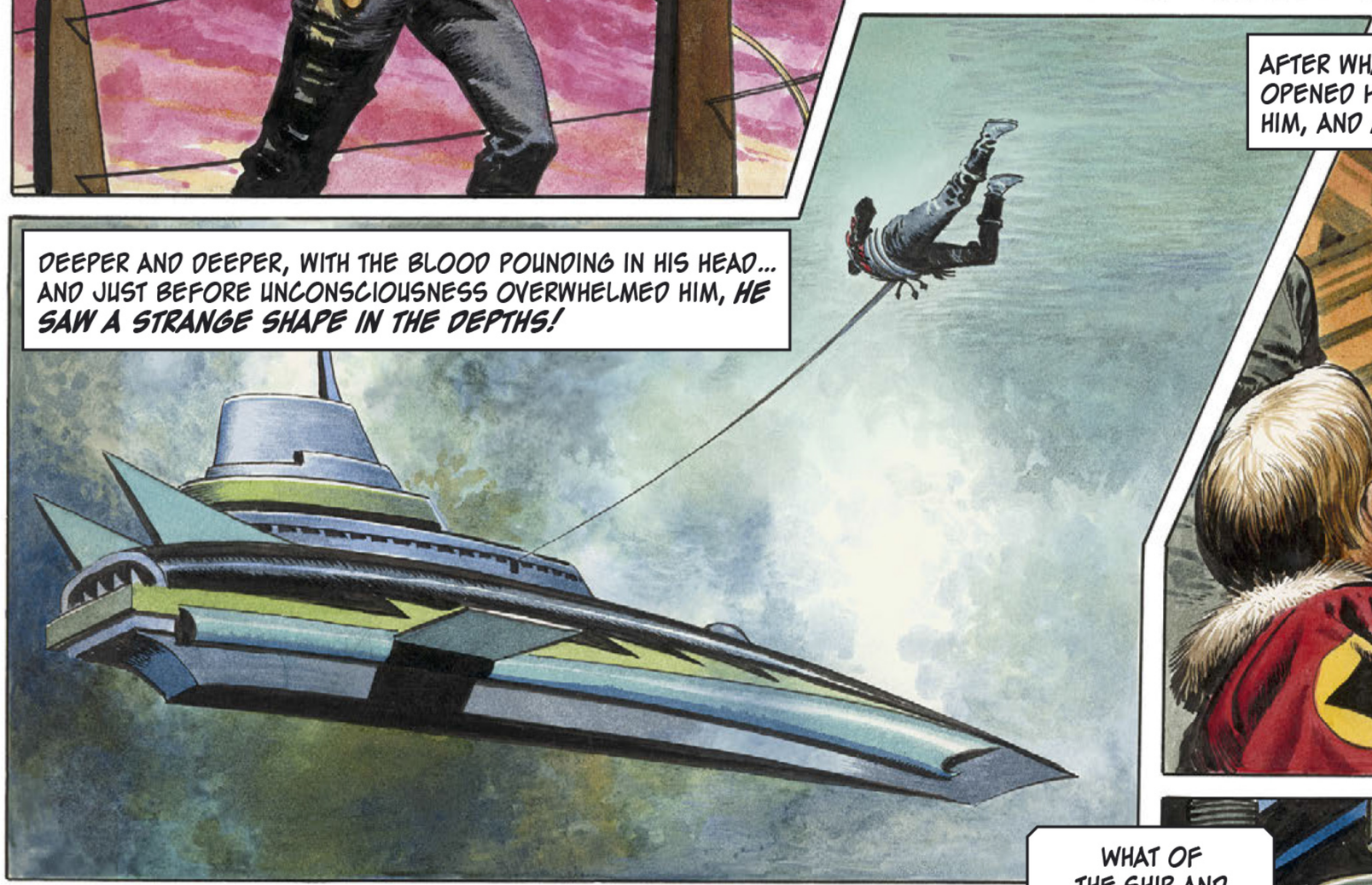

CREWING THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WERE THREE STAUNCH FRIENDS AND COMRADES – JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA...
IT'S A TRIGAN NAVY SHIP. THAT'S STRANGE... VERY STRANGE!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, ROFFA?
JANNO BROUGHT THE CRAFT DOWN TO WATER LEVEL AND THEY SKIMMED LOW OVER THE SHIP'S DESERTED DECKS.
WHY WOULD ONE OF OUR SHIPS BE WALLOWING HERE, RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN?
WE'LL SOON FIND OUT. STAND BY TO GO ALONGSIDE!
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF IT. STAY HERE... I'M GOING TO MAKE A SEARCH!
THERE WAS NO ANSWER TO HIS CRY.
RIGHT! FIRE A SHOT IF YOU RUN INTO ANY TROUBLE!

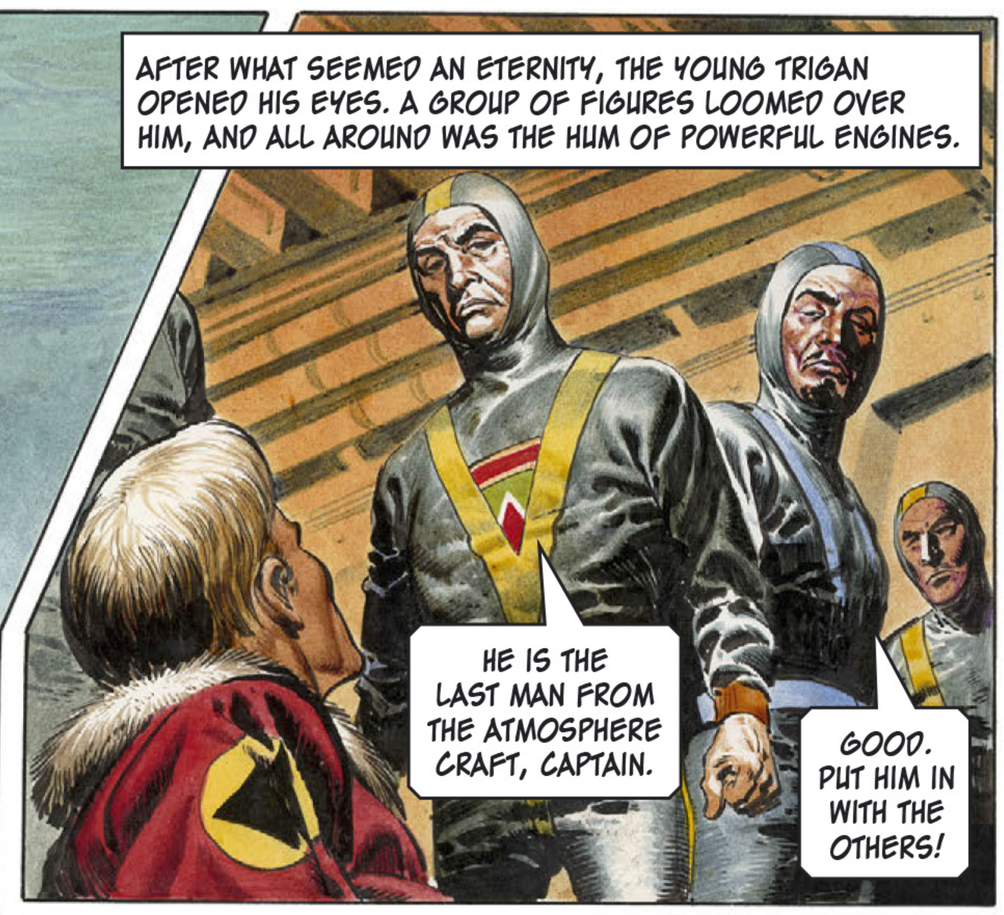
ROFFA DISAPPEARED FROM THEIR SIGHT ROUND THE SIDE OF THE SUPERSTRUCTURE. A LONG TIME WENT BY... AND PRESENTLY...
I'M GOING AFTER HIM!
TAKE CARE, JANNO. THERE'S SOMETHING SINISTER GOING ON HERE – I CAN SENSE IT!
JANNO WAS ALSO AWARE OF A STRANGE ATMOSPHERE OF EVIL ABOARD THE SILENT SHIP. PISTOL IN HAND, HE KICKED OPEN A DOOR AND ENTERED THE CREWS' COMPARTMENT...
THERE SHOULD BE AROUND FIFTY MEN ABOARD THIS SHIP... BUT WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
IN THE CONTROL DEPARTMENT, HE FOUND THE SHIP'S LOG WITH THE CAPTAIN'S REPORT WRITTEN THERE...
IT SAYS, "HAVE SIGHTED A STRANGE SHAPE IN THE WATER AHEAD AND AM GOING TO INVESTIGATE. IT MAY BE A–" AND THEN IT BREAKS OFF ABRUPTLY!
SUDDENLY...
WHAT WAS THAT? A SHOUT OF HELP!
ALMOST FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, JANNO KNEW THE MEANING OF BLIND PANIC AS HE STOOD THERE ON THE DECK OF THE ILL-FATED SHIP IN THE LIGHT OF THE DYING SUNS...
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? ANSWER ME! I KNOW YOU'RE WATCHING ME... SHOW YOURSELF!
JANNO RUSHED OUT ON DECK... AND CAME TO A SUDDEN, STARTLED HALT!
KEREN! OH NO!
THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WAS... EMPTY!
KEREN! KEREN... WHERE ARE YOU?
THE YOUNG TRIGAN'S INSTINCT WAS RIGHT! HE WAS BEING WATCHED...
...A SINISTER EYE WATCHED HIM FROM THE DARK SEA!

SUDDENLY, JANNO TURNED TO SEE A WHIP-LIKE THING LASHING TOWARDS HIM FROM OUT OF THE DARK SEA!
BY THE STARS!

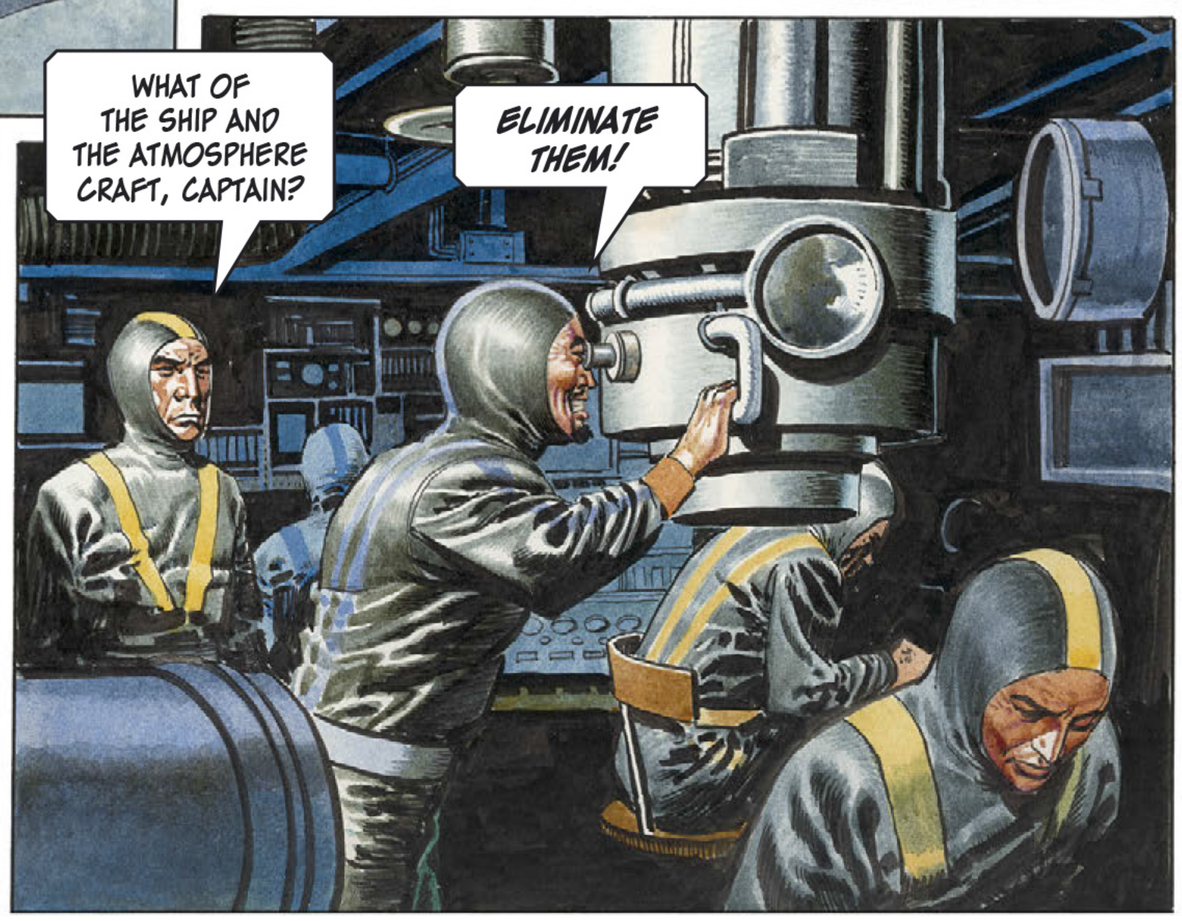
HE WAS SEIZED IN A MERCILESS GRIP...

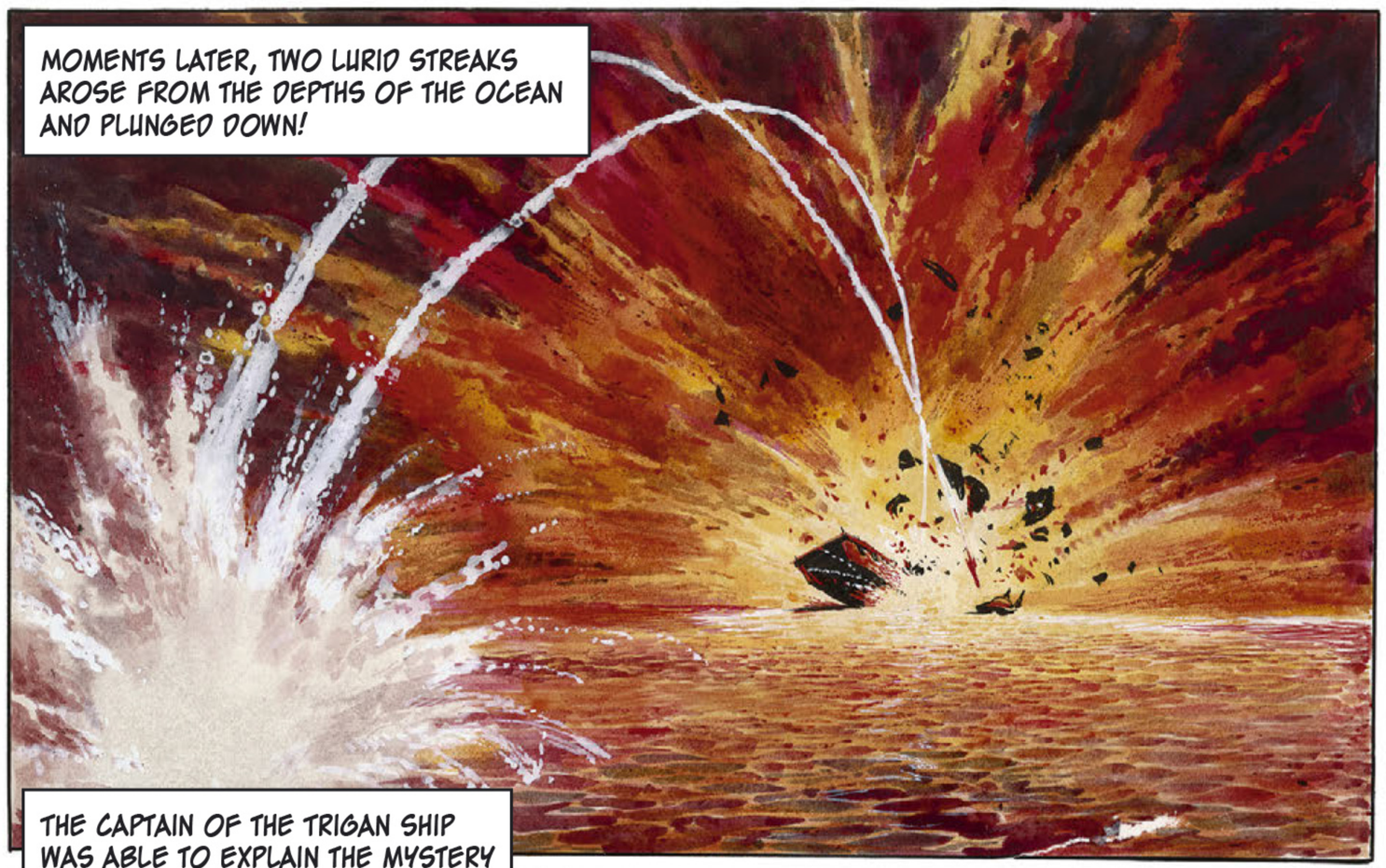
...AND DRAGGED HEADLONG INTO THE CHILL WATERS OF THE OCEAN!
AAAAAAAH!


DEEPER AND DEEPER, WITH THE BLOOD POUNDING IN HIS HEAD... AND JUST BEFORE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OVERWHELMED HIM, HE SAW A STRANGE SHAPE IN THE DEPTHS!


AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN ETERNITY, THE YOUNG TRIGAN OPENED HIS EYES. A GROUP OF FIGURES LOOMED OVER HIM, AND ALL AROUND WAS THE HUM OF POWERFUL ENGINES.
HE IS THE LAST MAN FROM THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, CAPTAIN.
GOOD. PUT HIM IN WITH THE OTHERS!

JANNO WAS DRAGGED ROUGHLY TO HIS FEET.
SET COURSE FOR THE ISLAND!

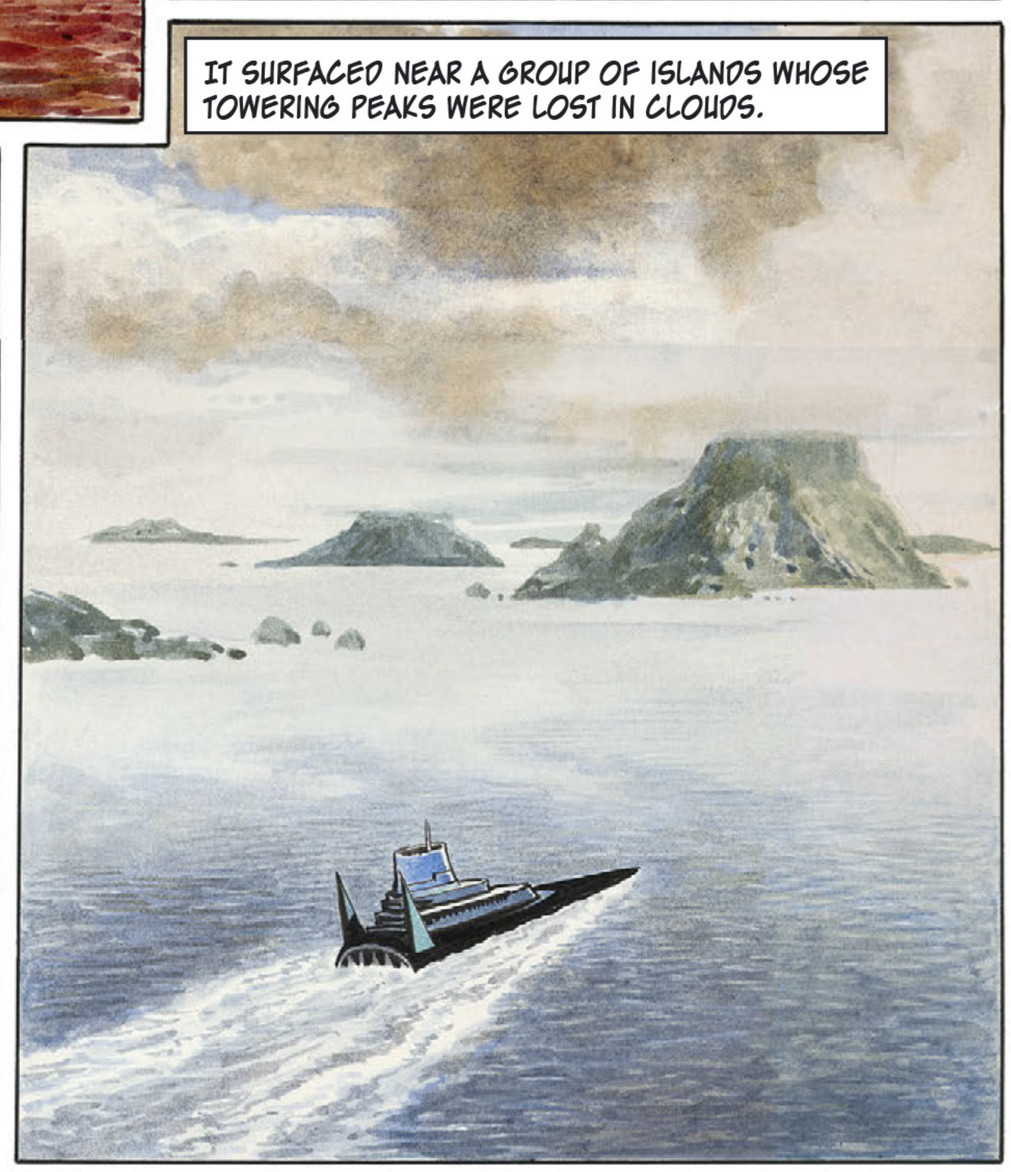

WHAT OF THE SHIP AND THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, CAPTAIN?
ELIMINATE THEM!

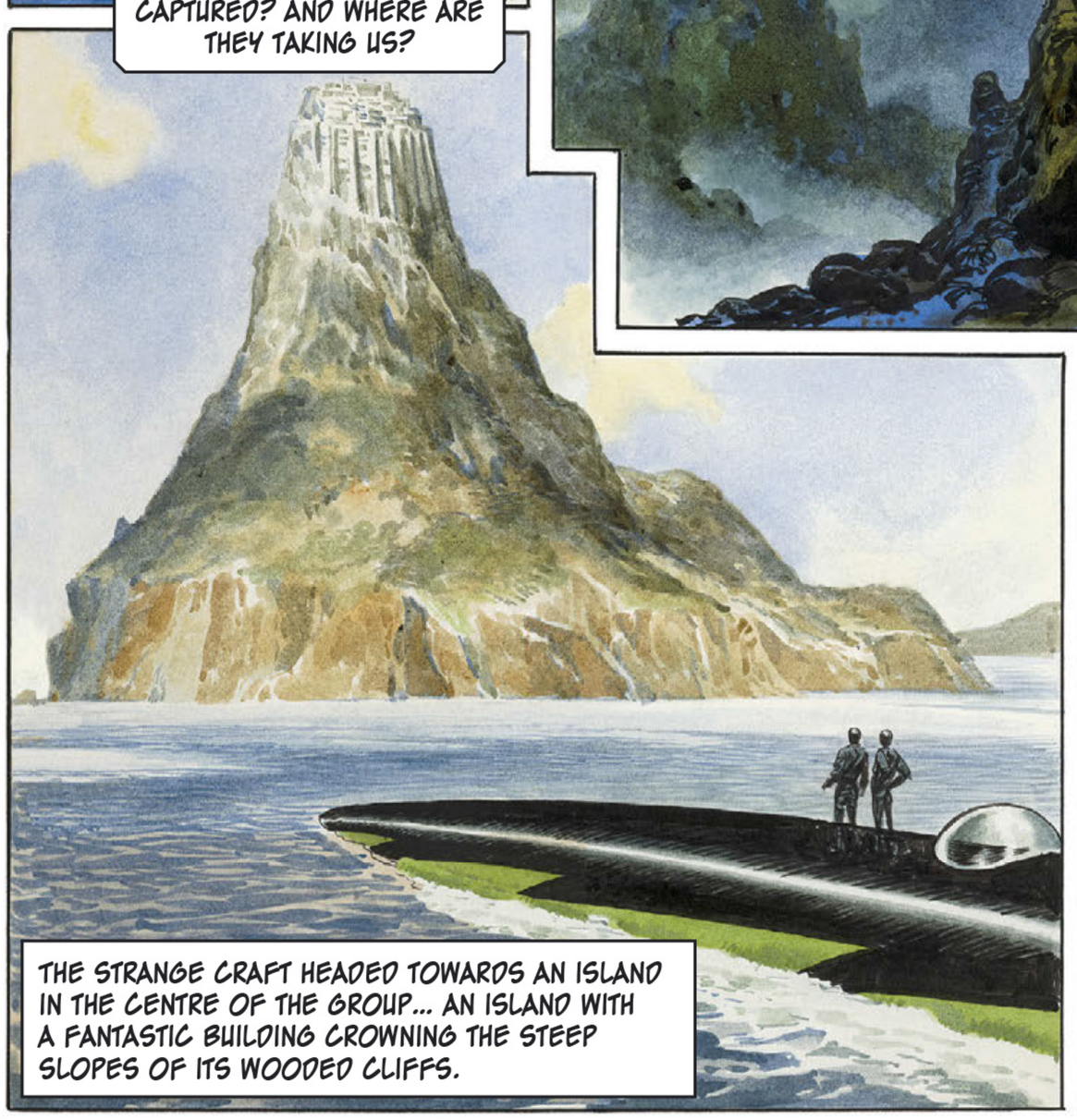

MOMENTS LATER, TWO LURID STREAKS AROSE FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE OCEAN AND PLUNGED DOWN!

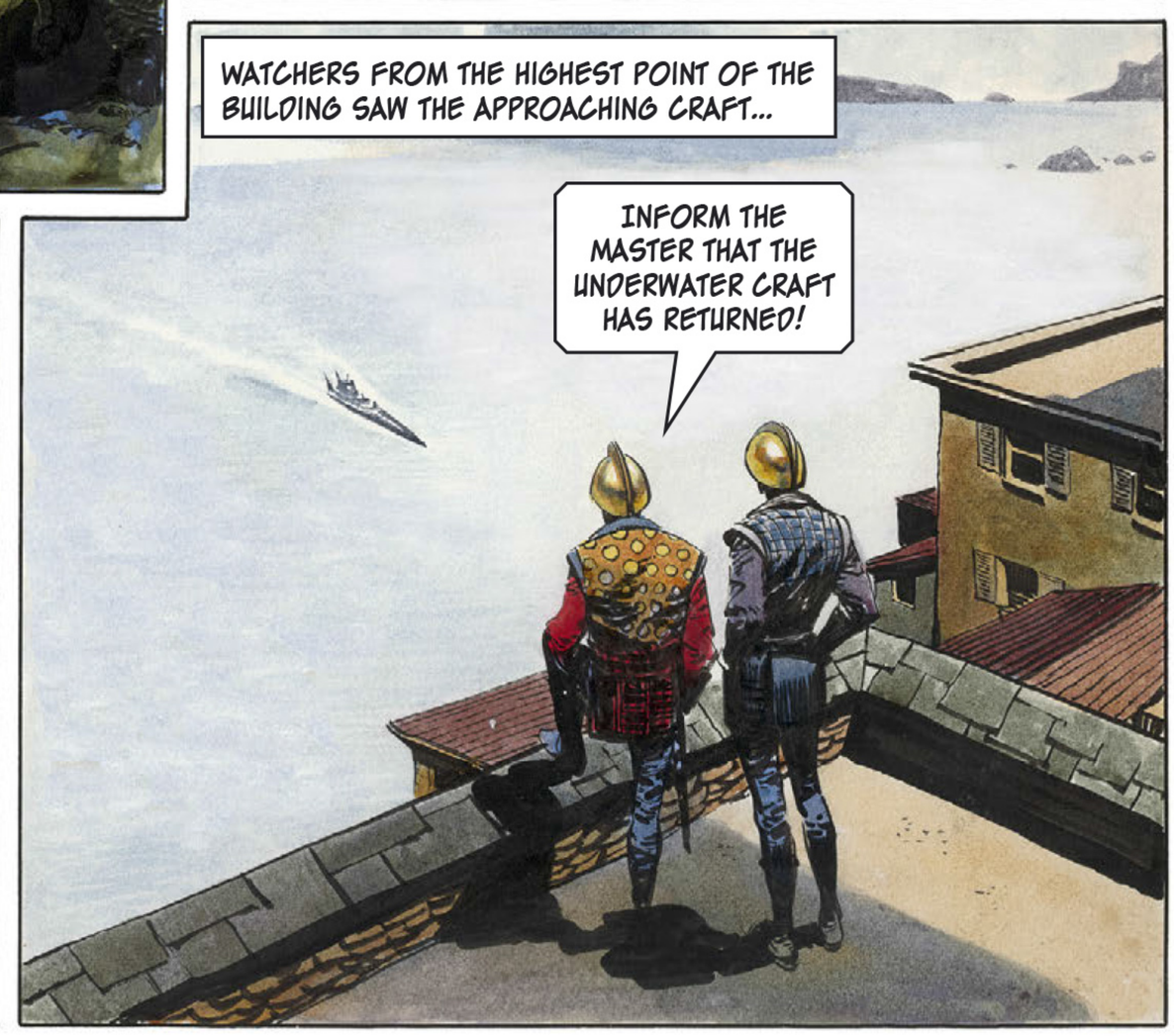
WHEN JANNO HAD FULLY RECOVERED HIS SENSES, HE FOUND HIMSELF IN A VAST COMPARTMENT PACKED WITH MEN, AMONGST THEM HIS COMRADES KEREN AND ROFFA.
A THING LIKE A WHIPLASH CAME AT ME FROM OUT OF THE SEA!
THE SAME HAPPENED TO US!
THE CREW OF THE SHIP ARE PRISONERS TOO... EVERY MAN!

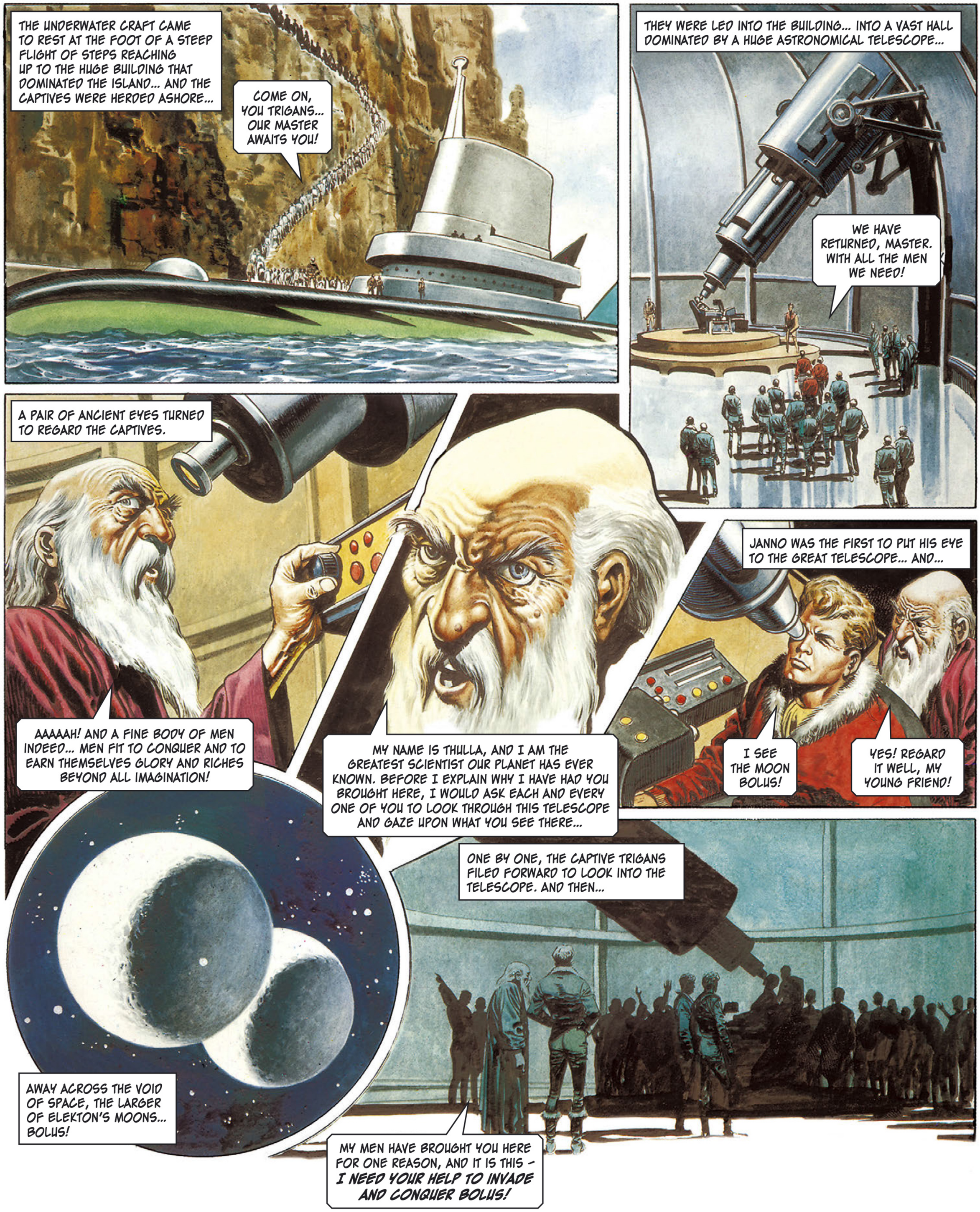
THE CAPTAIN OF THE TRIGAN SHIP WAS ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE MYSTERY OF HIS ABANDONED VESSEL...
WE SIGHTED THE SHAPE OF THE UNDERWATER CRAFT AHEAD AND I TURNED TO APPROACH IT... NEXT, A CLOUD OF GAS DESCENDED UPON US. I REMEMBER CHOKING FOR BREATH... AND THEN, OBLIVION!
BUT WHY HAVE WE BEEN CAPTURED? AND WHERE ARE THEY TAKING US?

THE ANSWER TO JANNO'S QUESTION LAY FAR AHEAD! FOR MANY DAYS AND NIGHTS, THE STRANGE UNDERWATER CRAFT SPED THROUGH THE UNCHARTED DEPTHS OF THE OCEANS... TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON...

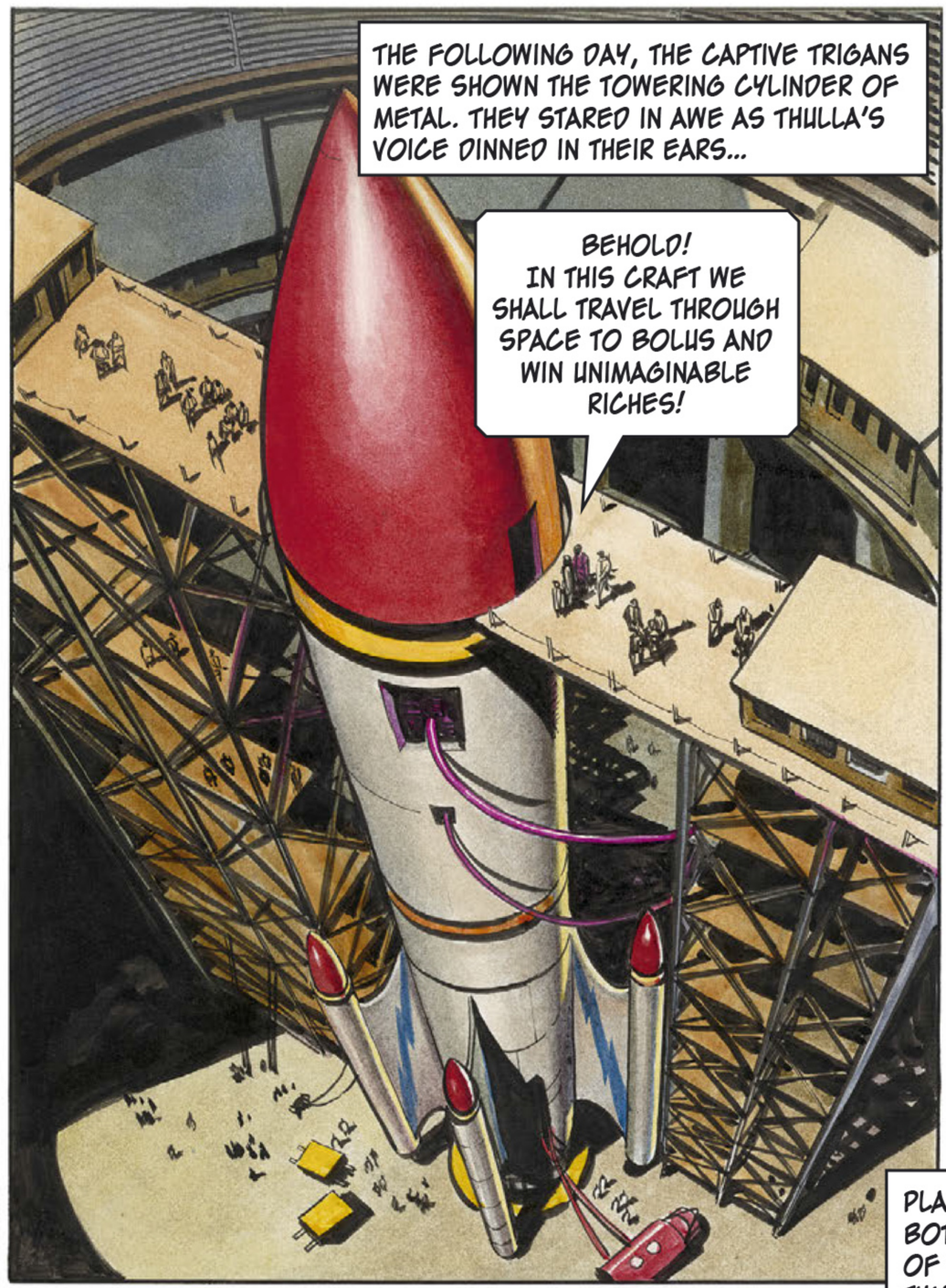

IT SURFACED NEAR A GROUP OF ISLANDS WHOSE TOWERING PEAKS WERE LOST IN CLOUDS.


THE STRANGE CRAFT HEADED TOWARDS AN ISLAND IN THE CENTRE OF THE GROUP... AN ISLAND WITH A FANTASTIC BUILDING CROWNING THE STEEP SLOPES OF ITS WOODED CLIFFS.

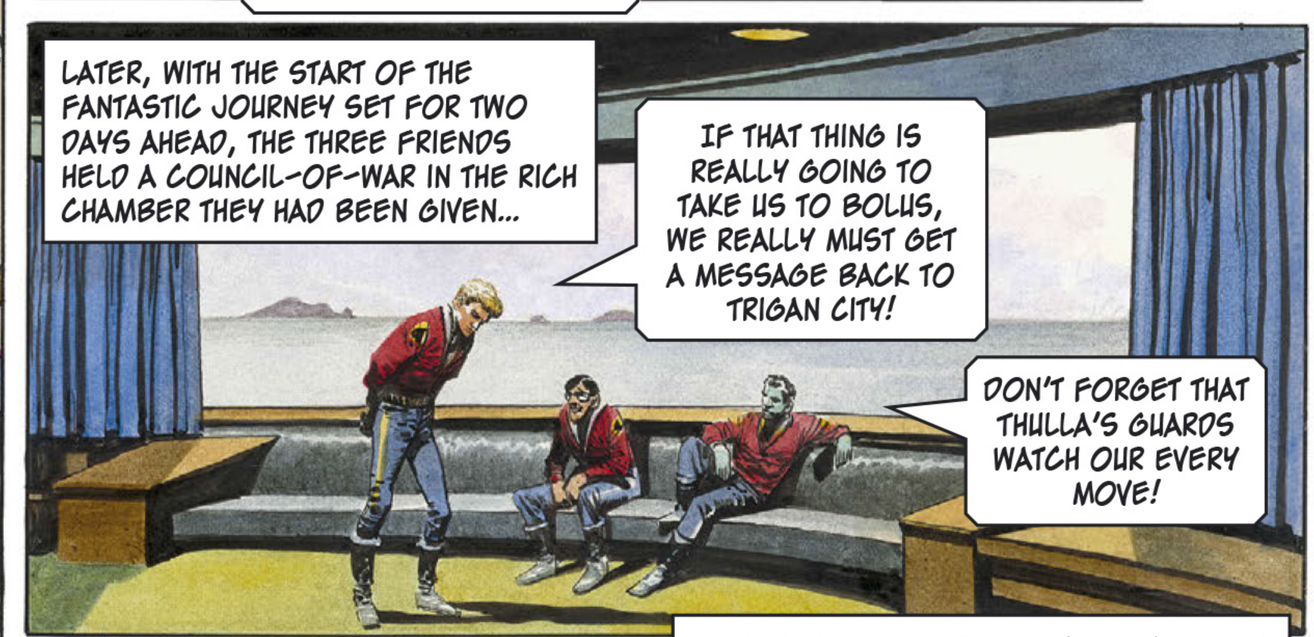

WATCHERS FROM THE HIGHEST POINT OF THE BUILDING SAW THE APPROACHING CRAFT...
INFORM THE MASTER THAT THE UNDERWATER CRAFT HAS RETURNED!


THE UNDERWATER CRAFT CAME TO REST AT THE FOOT OF A STEEP FLIGHT OF STEPS REACHING UP TO THE HUGE BUILDING THAT DOMINATED THE ISLAND... AND THE CAPTIVES WERE HERDED ASHORE...
COME ON, YOU TRIGANS... OUR MASTER AWAITS YOU!
THEY WERE LED INTO THE BUILDING... INTO A VAST HALL DOMINATED BY A HUGE ASTRONOMICAL TELESCOPE...
WE HAVE RETURNED, MASTER. WITH ALL THE MEN WE NEED!
A PAIR OF ANCIENT EYES TURNED TO REGARD THE CAPTIVES.
AAAAAH! AND A FINE BODY OF MEN INDEED... MEN FIT TO CONQUER AND TO EARN THEMSELVES GLORY AND RICHES BEYOND ALL IMAGINATION!
MY NAME IS THULLA, AND I AM THE GREATEST SCIENTIST OUR PLANET HAS EVER KNOWN. BEFORE I EXPLAIN WHY I HAVE HAD YOU BROUGHT HERE, I WOULD ASK EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU TO LOOK THROUGH THIS TELESCOPE AND GAZE UPON WHAT YOU SEE THERE...
JANNO WAS THE FIRST TO PUT HIS EYE TO THE GREAT TELESCOPE... AND...
I SEE THE MOON BOLUS!
YES! REGARD IT WELL, MY YOUNG FRIEND!
ONE BY ONE, THE CAPTIVE TRIGANS FILED FORWARD TO LOOK INTO THE TELESCOPE. AND THEN...
AWAY ACROSS THE VOID OF SPACE, THE LARGER OF ELEKTON'S MOONS... BOLUS!
MY MEN HAVE BROUGHT YOU HERE FOR ONE REASON, AND IT IS THIS – I NEED YOUR HELP TO INVADE AND CONQUER BOLUS!

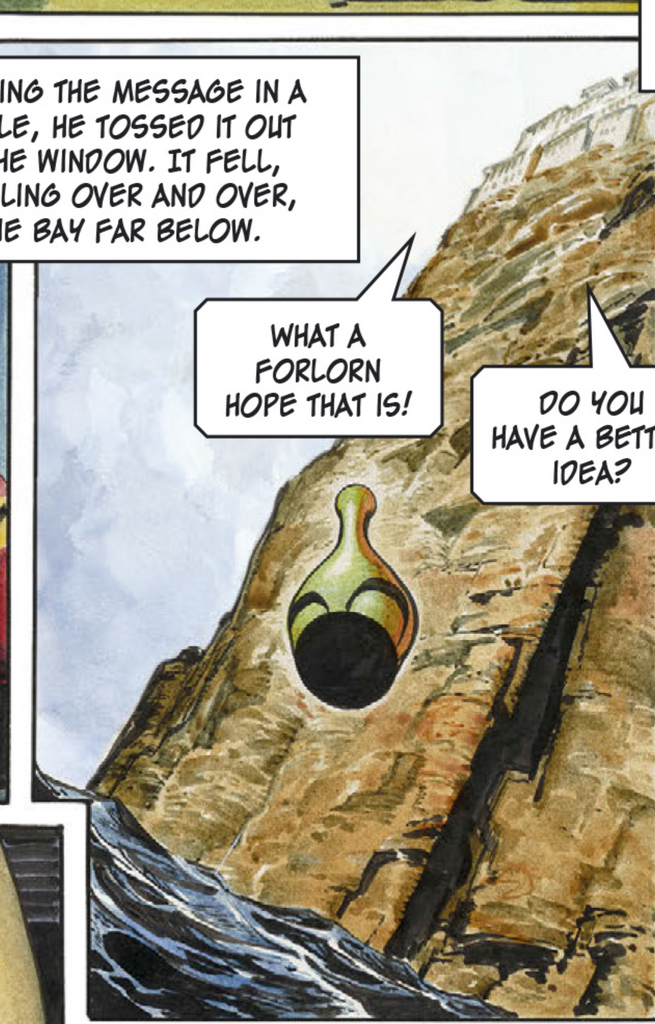
SO FANTASTIC AND FAR-FETCHED WAS THIS STATEMENT THAT THE TRIGANS SCOFFED...
RIDICULOUS! BOLUS IS FAR BEYOND THE RANGE OF ANY CRAFT ON ELEKTON!
I HAVE BUILT A CRAFT WHICH WILL FLY TO BOLUS... AND YOU WILL TRAVEL ON IT!
I BELIEVE THAT BOLUS IS INHABITED, AND THAT ITS VAST WEALTH OF MINERAL RESOURCES WILL ONLY BE OBTAINED AFTER MUCH HARD FIGHTING... WHICH IS WHY I NEED YOU! COME WITH ME AND I WILL MAKE EVERY ONE OF YOU RICH BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS!
IN ANSWER TO JANNO'S QUESTION, THE OLD MAN INDICATED THE ARMED GUARDS WHO SURROUNDED THEM...
AND IF WE REFUSE?
ALL WHO REFUSE WILL DIE! I WILL GIVE YOU A FEW MOMENTS TO MAKE UP YOUR MINDS!
JANNO HAD A BRIEF COUNCIL-OF-WAR WITH HIS COMRADES... BUT THEIR DECISION WAS NEVER IN DOUBT...
WELL... WHAT IS IT TO BE?
I CAN'T HAZARD THE LIVES OF MY MEN... I INTEND TO AGREE TO THE OLD MADMAN'S PLAN!
YES... THERE'S NOTHING ELSE FOR IT...
WE WILL ACCOMPANY YOU TO THE MOON BOLUS!
YOU WILL NOT REGRET IT, MY FRIENDS! I PROMISE YOU THAT EACH MAN WILL RETURN WITH ENOUGH RICHES TO BUY THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
LATER THAT DAY, THULLA ENTERED A HUGE CHAMBER IN HIS STRANGE PALACE AND GAZED UPON A TOWERING CYLINDER OF GLEAMING METAL WHICH STOOD THERE...
HEH! THOSE TRIGANS THINK THAT THEY WERE LISTENING TO THE RAVINGS OF A FOOLISH OLD MAN - BUT BEFORE MANY DAYS HAVE PASSED, WE SHALL ALL BE STREAKING THROUGH SPACE IN MY WONDER CRAFT!
AND WHAT OF THE TRIGANS? WILL YOU KEEP FAITH WITH THEM?
OF COURSE NOT! WE SHALL RETURN WITH THE RICHES OF BOLUS... AND LEAVE THEM BEHIND ON THAT INHOSPITABLE MOON!


THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE CAPTIVE TRIGANS WERE SHOWN THE TOWERING CYLINDER OF METAL. THEY STARED IN AWE AS THULLA'S VOICE DINNED IN THEIR EARS...
BEHOLD! IN THIS CRAFT WE SHALL TRAVEL THROUGH SPACE TO BOLUS AND WIN UNIMAGINABLE RICHES!

JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA EXCHANGED GLANCES...
IT SEEMS THAT THULLA IS NOT THE DODDERING OLD FOOL WE TOOK HIM TO BE!
PERHAPS... PERHAPS THIS CRAFT COULD PENETRATE BEYOND OUT ATMOSPHERE AND REACH BOLUS...
IT CERTAINLY LOOKS AS IF IT COULD!

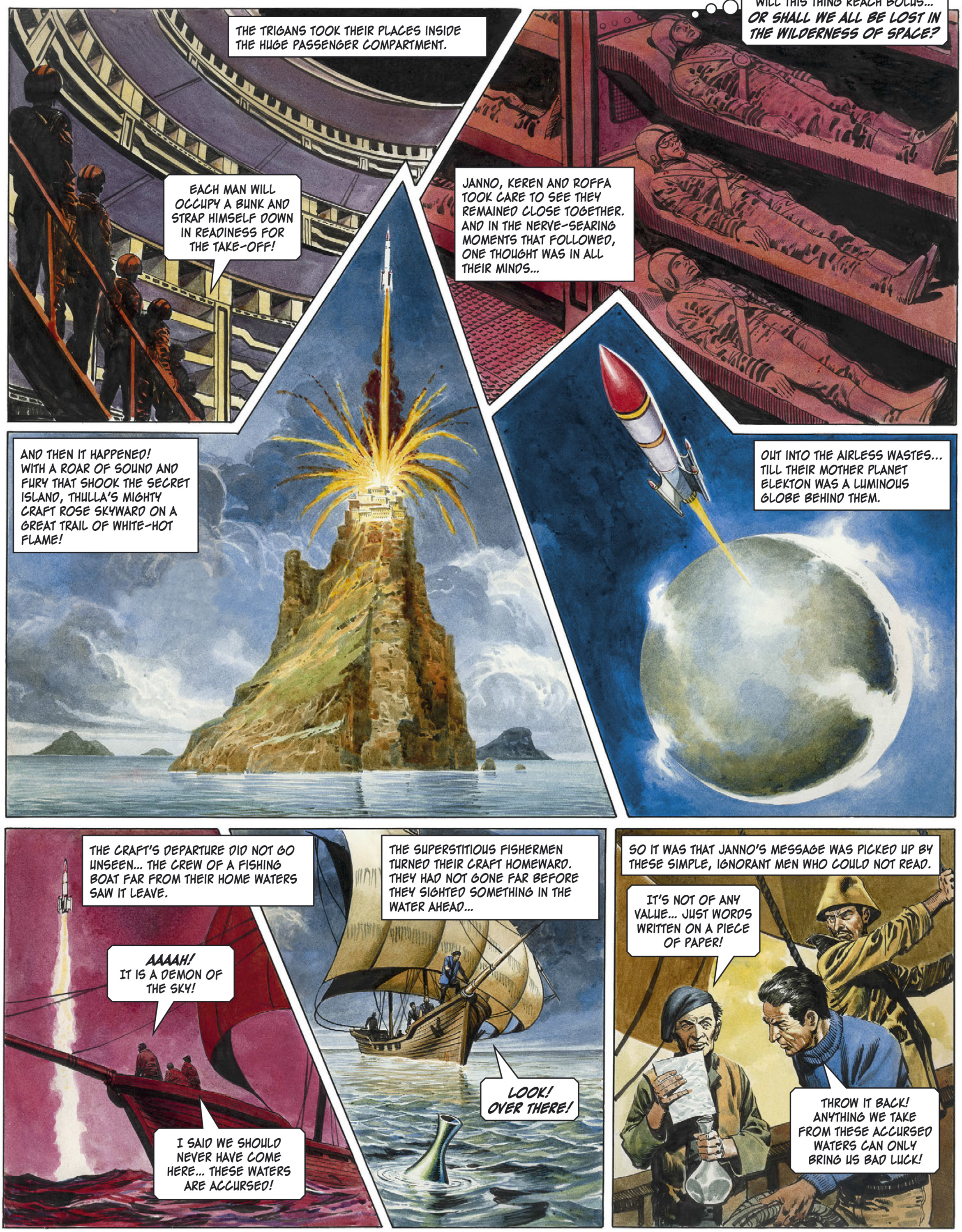

LATER, WITH THE START OF THE FANTASTIC JOURNEY SET FOR TWO DAYS AHEAD, THE THREE FRIENDS HELD A COUNCIL-OF-WAR IN THE RICH CHAMBER THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN...
IF THAT THING IS REALLY GOING TO TAKE US TO BOLUS, WE REALLY MUST GET A MESSAGE BACK TO TRIGAN CITY!
DON'T FORGET THAT THULLA'S GUARDS WATCH OUR EVERY MOVE!

AN IDEA CAME TO JANNO. HE WROTE A COMPLETE REPORT OF EVERYTHING THAT HAD HAPPENED AND ADDRESSED IT TO THE EMPEROR TRIGO HIMSELF...
THERE IS A WAY... A MILLION-TO-ONE CHANCE - BUT THE ONLY CHANCE OF OUR PEOPLE KNOWING WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO US!


PLACING THE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE, HE TOSSED IT OUT OF THE WINDOW. IT FELL, TUMBLING OVER AND OVER, TO THE BAY FAR BELOW.
WHAT A FORLORN HOPE THAT IS!
DO YOU HAVE A BETTER IDEA?

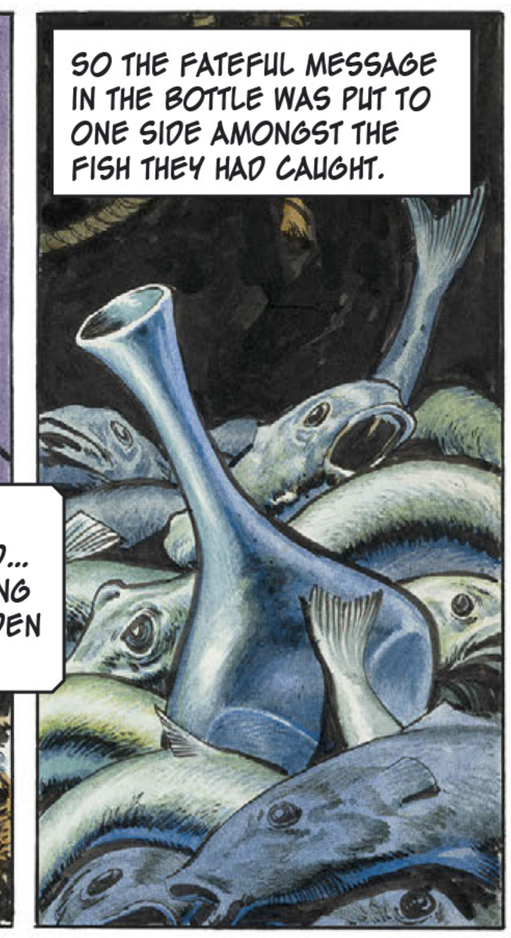
TWO DAYS LATER, GUARDS CAME CARRYING STRANGE TRAPPINGS AND EQUIPMENT...
PUT THESE ON - AND REMEMBER THAT YOUR GUNS WILL NOT BE LOADED UNTIL WE REACH BOLUS!

SOON, JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA WERE FILING INTO THE VAST HULL OF THE OUTER-SPACE CRAFT WITH THE REST OF THE TRIGANS...

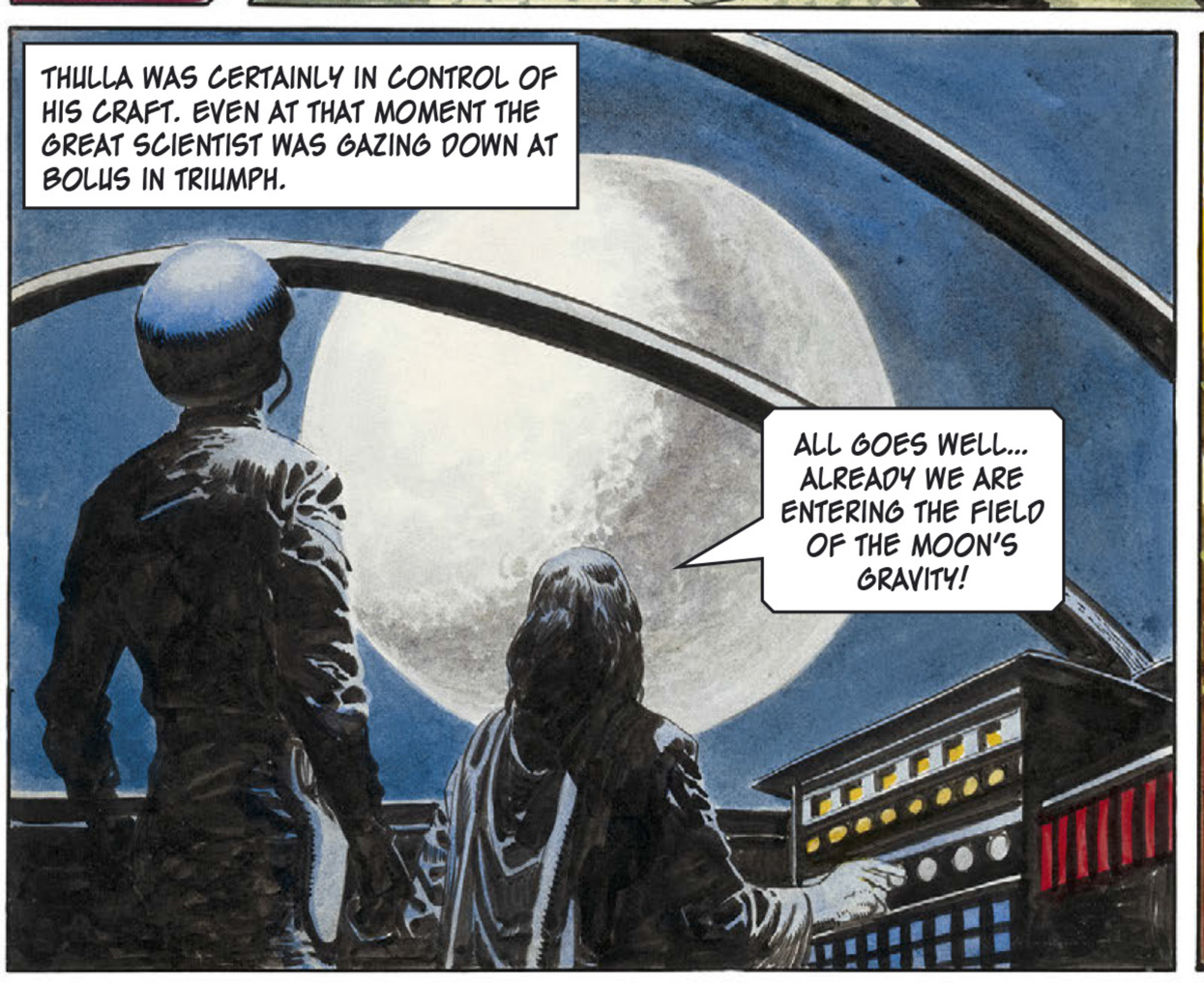

THE TRIGANS TOOK THEIR PLACES INSIDE THE HUGE PASSENGER COMPARTMENT.
EACH MAN WILL OCCUPY A BUNK AND STRAP HIMSELF DOWN IN READINESS FOR THE TAKE-OFF!
JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA TOOK CARE TO SEE THEY REMAINED CLOSE TOGETHER. AND IN THE NERVE-SEARING MOMENTS THAT FOLLOWED, ONE THOUGHT WAS IN ALL THEIR MINDS...
WILL THIS THING REACH BOLUS... OR SHALL WE ALL BE LOST IN THE WILDERNESS OF SPACE?
AND THEN IT HAPPENED! WITH A ROAR OF SOUND AND FURY THAT SHOOK THE SECRET ISLAND, THULLA'S MIGHTY CRAFT ROSE SKYWARD ON A GREAT TRAIL OF WHITE-HOT FLAME!
OUT INTO THE AIRLESS WASTES... TILL THEIR MOTHER PLANET ELEKTON WAS A LUMINOUS GLOBE BEHIND THEM.
THE CRAFT'S DEPARTURE DID NOT GO UNSEEN... THE CREW OF A FISHING BOAT FAR FROM THEIR HOME WATERS SAW IT LEAVE.
AAAAH! IT IS A DEMON OF THE SKY!
I SAID WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME HERE... THESE WATERS ARE ACCURSED!
THE SUPERSTITIOUS FISHERMEN TURNED THEIR CRAFT HOMEWARD. THEY HAD NOT GONE FAR BEFORE THEY SIGHTED SOMETHING IN THE WATER AHEAD...
LOOK! OVER THERE!
SO IT WAS THAT JANNO'S MESSAGE WAS PICKED UP BY THESE SIMPLE, IGNORANT MEN WHO COULD NOT READ.
IT'S NOT OF ANY VALUE... JUST WORDS WRITTEN ON A PIECE OF PAPER!
THROW IT BACK! ANYTHING WE TAKE FROM THESE ACCURSED WATERS CAN ONLY BRING US BAD LUCK!

THE FATE OF JANNO'S MESSAGE LAY IN THE BALANCE... AND THEN...
NO! DON'T THROW IT BACK INTO THE SEA!

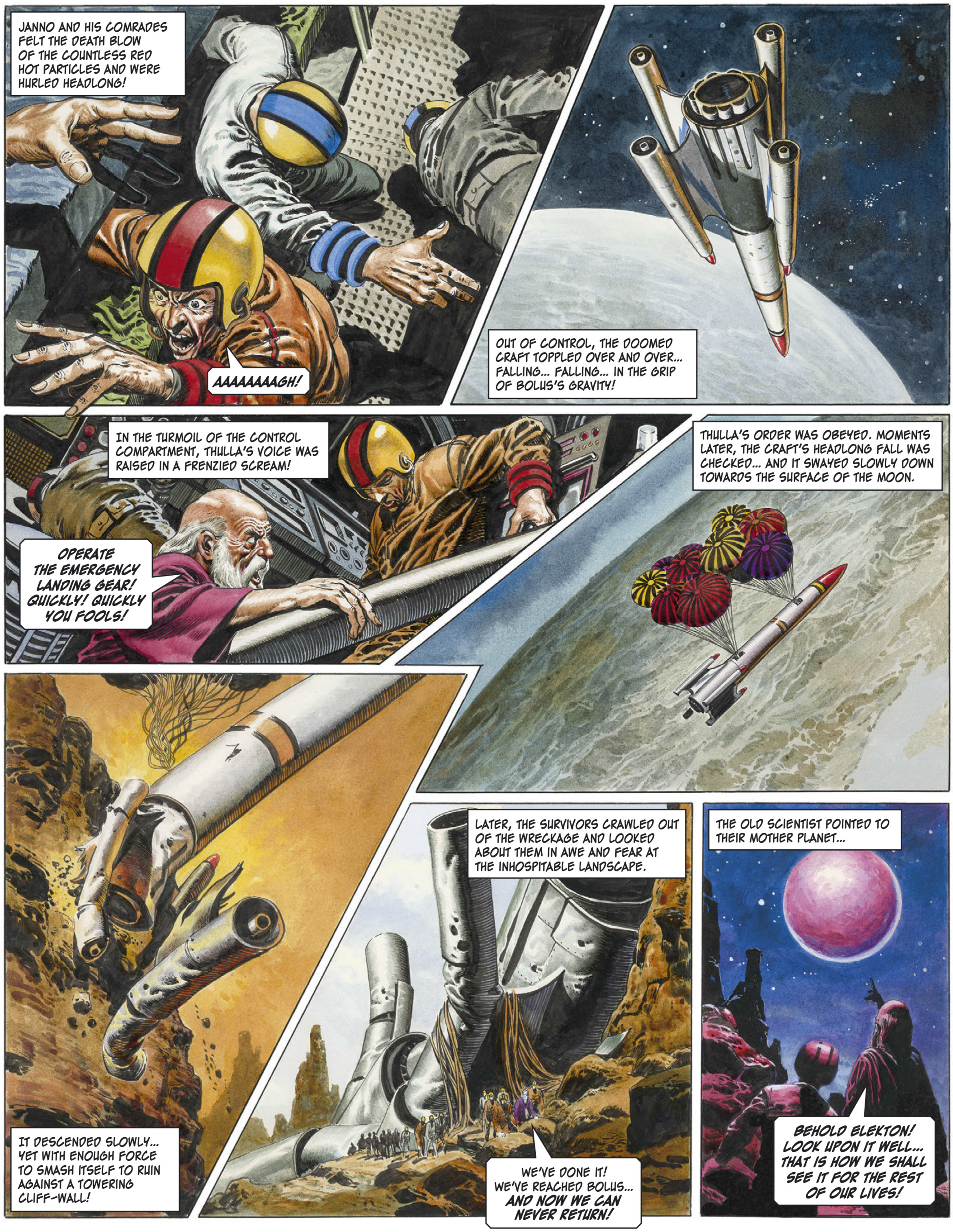
WHEN WE RETURN TO PORT WE CAN SELL IT AS A SOUVENIR. WE'LL SPIN A GOOD STORY... SAY THAT WE FOUND IT IN THE LAIR OF A SEA DEMON...
I STILL SAY IT'S ACCURSED... LIKE EVERYTHING IN THE FORBIDDEN SEA!


SO THE FATEFUL MESSAGE IN THE BOTTLE WAS PUT TO ONE SIDE AMONGST THE FISH THEY HAD CAUGHT.

MEANWILE, DEEP IN THE AIRLESS WASTE BETWEEN ELEKTON AND THE MOON BOLUS, THULLA'S STRANGE CRAFT JOURNEYED ON...
IN THE VAST HULL, JANNO AND HIS COMRADES LAY IN THEIR BUNKS...
I HOPE THULLA IS IN FULL CONTROL OF THIS CRAFT... IT WOULD BE UNPLEASANT TO BE DASHED TO PIECES ON THE SURFACE OF BOLUS!
I WONDER HOW FAR WE'VE GONE BY NOW?


THULLA WAS CERTAINLY IN CONTROL OF HIS CRAFT. EVEN AT THAT MOMENT THE GREAT SCIENTIST WAS GAZING DOWN AT BOLUS IN TRIUMPH.
ALL GOES WELL... ALREADY WE ARE ENTERING THE FIELD OF THE MOON'S GRAVITY!

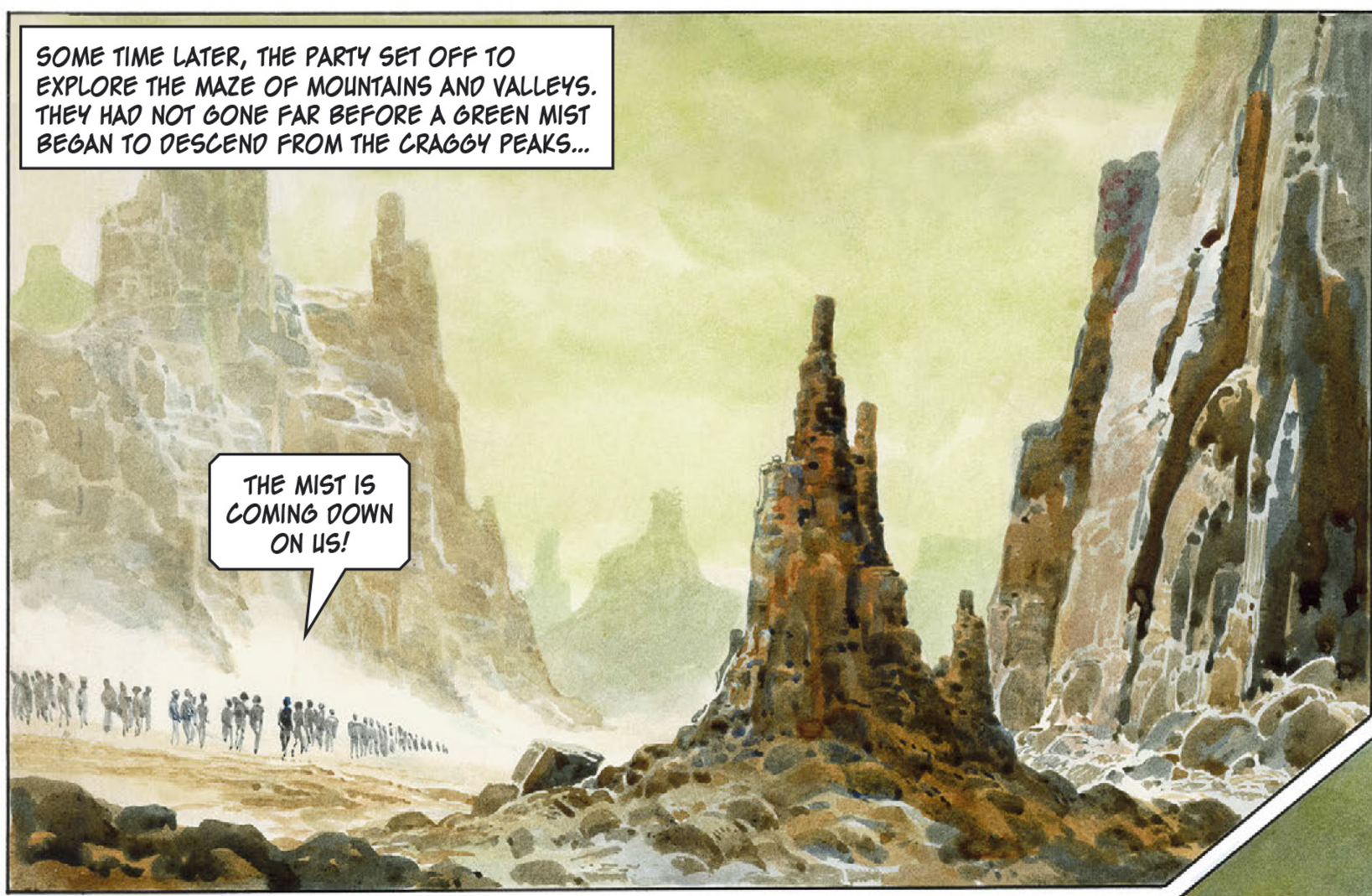
AND THEN... IT HAPPENED! THE MILLION-TO-ONE DISASTER THAT NOT EVEN THULLA COULD HAVE PREVENTED...
A HAIL OF METEORITES!

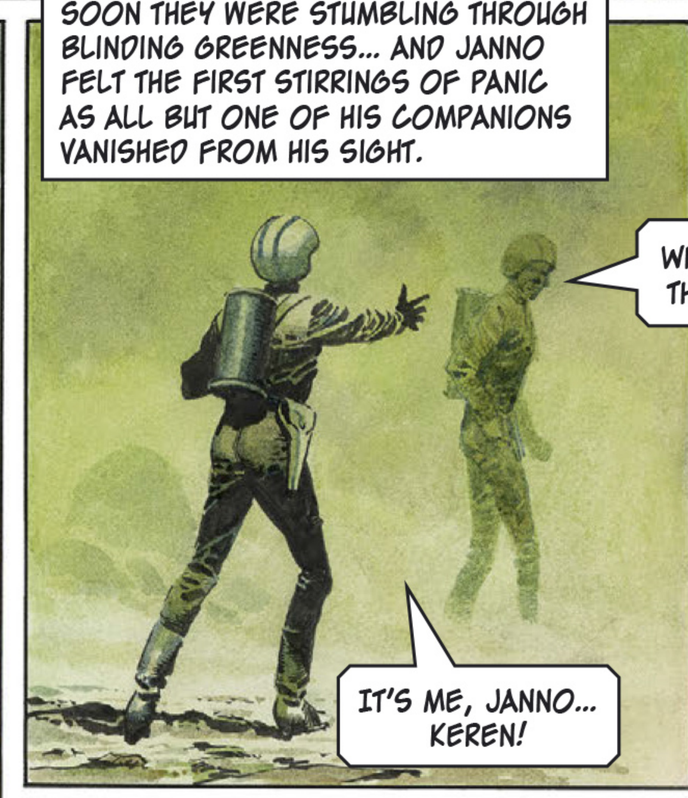

JANNO AND HIS COMRADES FELT THE DEATH BLOW OF THE COUNTLESS RED HOT PARTICLES AND WERE HURLED HEADLONG!
AAAAAAAAGH!
OUT OF CONTROL, THE DOOMED CRAFT TOPPLED OVER AND OVER... FALLING... FALLING... IN THE GRIP OF BOLUS'S GRAVITY!
IN THE TURMOIL OF THE CONTROL COMPARTMENT, THULLA'S VOICE WAS RAISED IN A FRENZIED SCREAM!
OPERATE THE EMERGENCY LANDING GEAR! QUICKLY! QUICKLY YOU FOOLS!
THULLA'S ORDER WAS OBEYED. MOMENTS LATER, THE CRAFT'S HEADLONG FALL WAS CHECKED... AND IT SWAYED SLOWLY DOWN TOWARDS THE SURFACE OF THE MOON.
IT DESCENDED SLOWLY... YET WITH ENOUGH FORCE TO SMASH ITSELF TO RUIN AGAINST A TOWERING CLIFF-WALL!
LATER, THE SURVIVORS CRAWLED OUT OF THE WRECKAGE AND LOOKED ABOUT THEM IN AWE AND FEAR AT THE INHOSPITABLE LANDSCAPE.
WE'VE DONE IT! WE'VE REACHED BOLUS... AND NOW WE CAN NEVER RETURN!
THE OLD SCIENTIST POINTED TO THEIR MOTHER PLANET...
BEHOLD ELEKTON! LOOK UPON IT WELL... THAT IS HOW WE SHALL SEE IT FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES!

WE WILL CONQUER BOLUS AND MAKE IT OUR HOME! ISSUE THE TRIGANS WITH AMMUNITION!
UNLIKE THE OTHER SURVIVORS, THE THOUGHT OF BEING STRANDED ON BOLUS SEEMED TO FILL THULLA WITH FIENDISH DELIGHT. HE CALLED TO HIS GUARDS...

THULLA'S GRIM-FACED GUARDS FETCHED AMMUNITION FROM THE WRECKAGE OF THE SPACE CRAFT AND GAVE IT TO JANNO AND HIS COMRADES.
TAKE IT! WE ARE ALL COMRADES IN ADVERSITY NOW AND WE MUST FIGHT TOGETHER... OR PERISH!

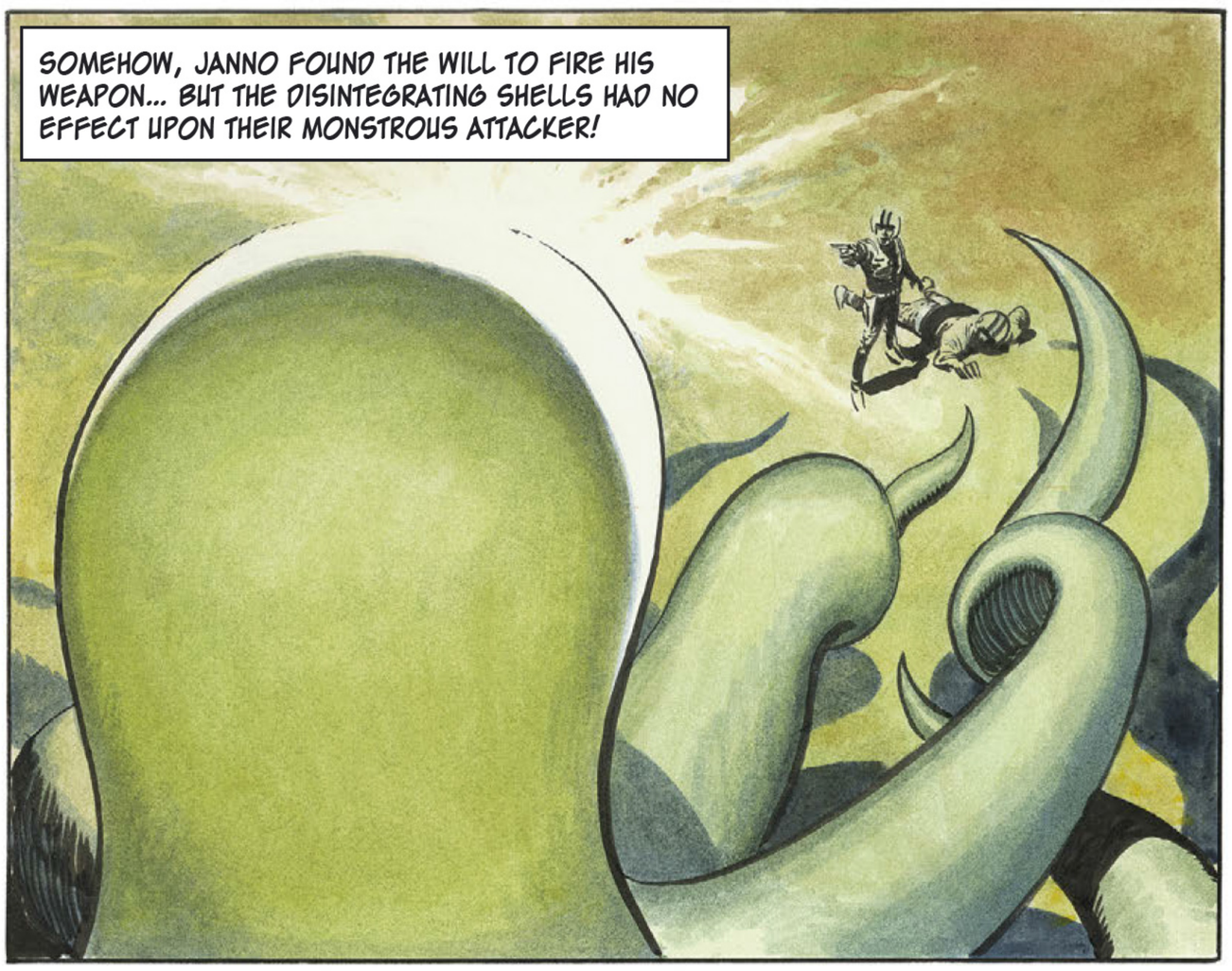
THE IDEA OF HAVING THOSE BRUTES FOR COMRADES FILLS ME WITH DESPAIR!
ME TOO, JANNO! BUT WE'VE NO CHOICE...


SOME TIME LATER, THE PARTY SET OFF TO EXPLORE THE MAZE OF MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS. THEY HAD NOT GONE FAR BEFORE A GREEN MIST BEGAN TO DESCEND FROM THE CRAGGY PEAKS...
THE MIST IS COMING DOWN ON US!

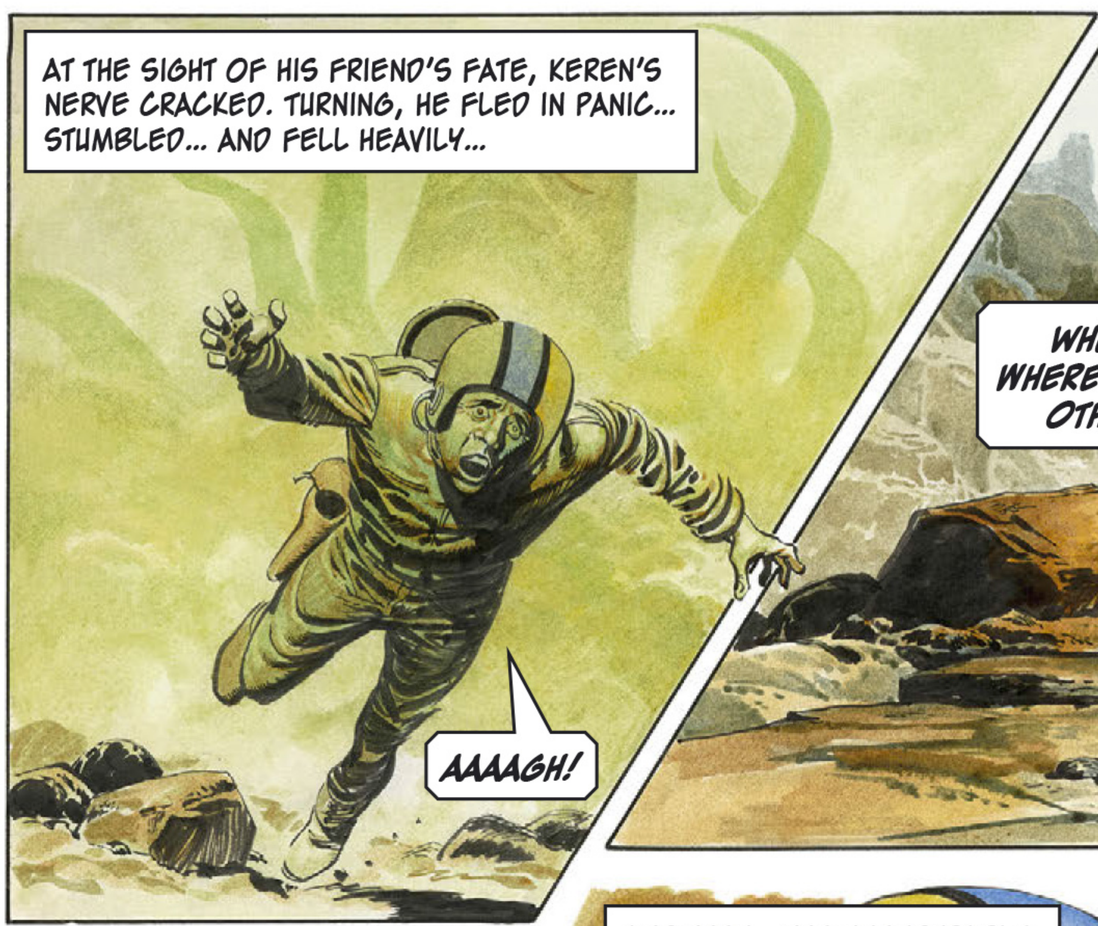

SOON THEY WERE STUMBLING THROUGH BLINDING GREENNESS... AND JANNO FELT THE FIRST STIRRINGS OF PANIC AS ALL BUT ONE OF HIS COMPANIONS VANISHED FROM HIS SIGHT.
WHO'S THAT?
IT'S ME, JANNO... KEREN!

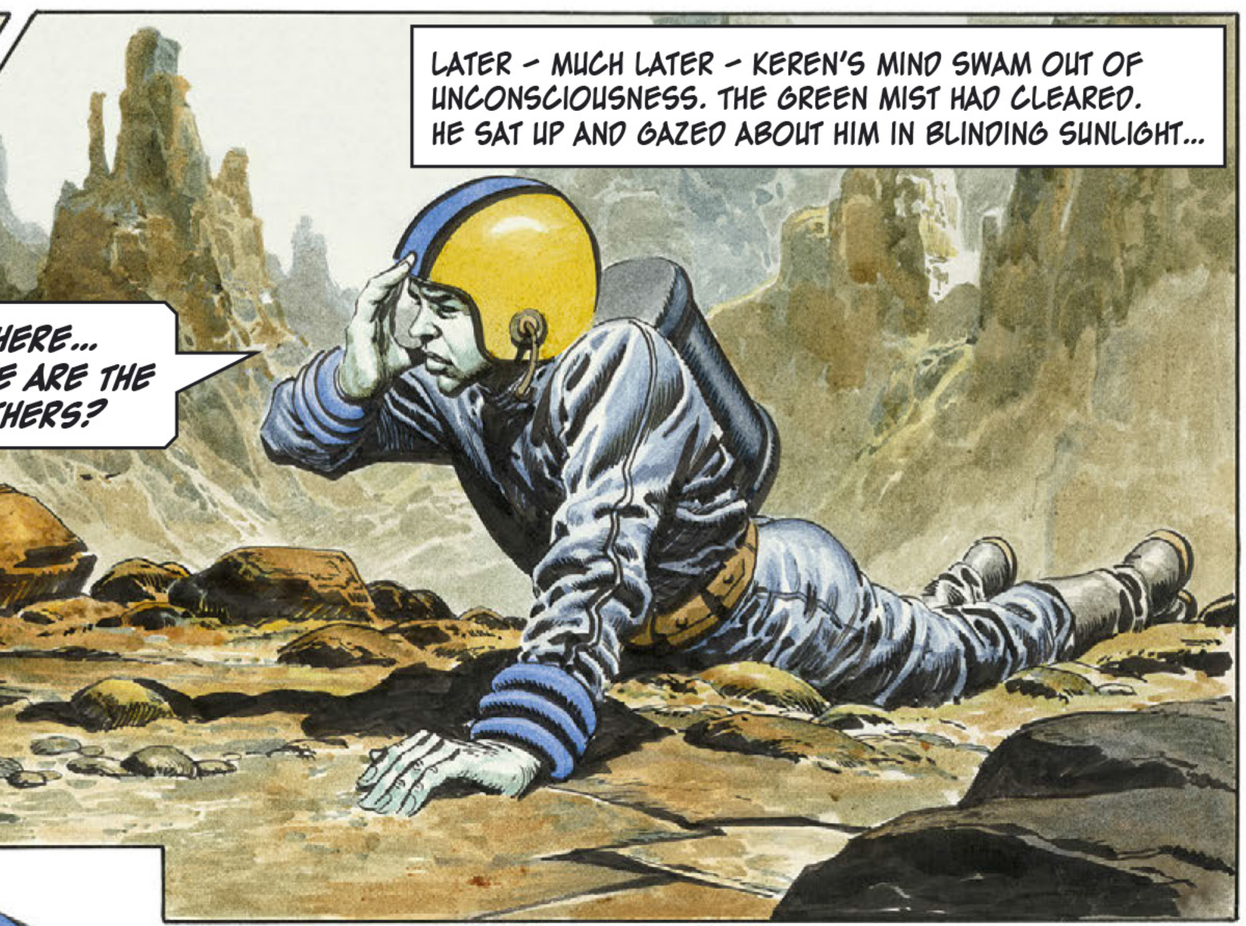
THE TWO FRIENDS CLUNG TO EACH OTHER FOR MUTUAL SUPPORT... AND THEN... IT HAPPENED!
AAAAAAH! LOOK! BY THE STARS... WHAT IS IT?

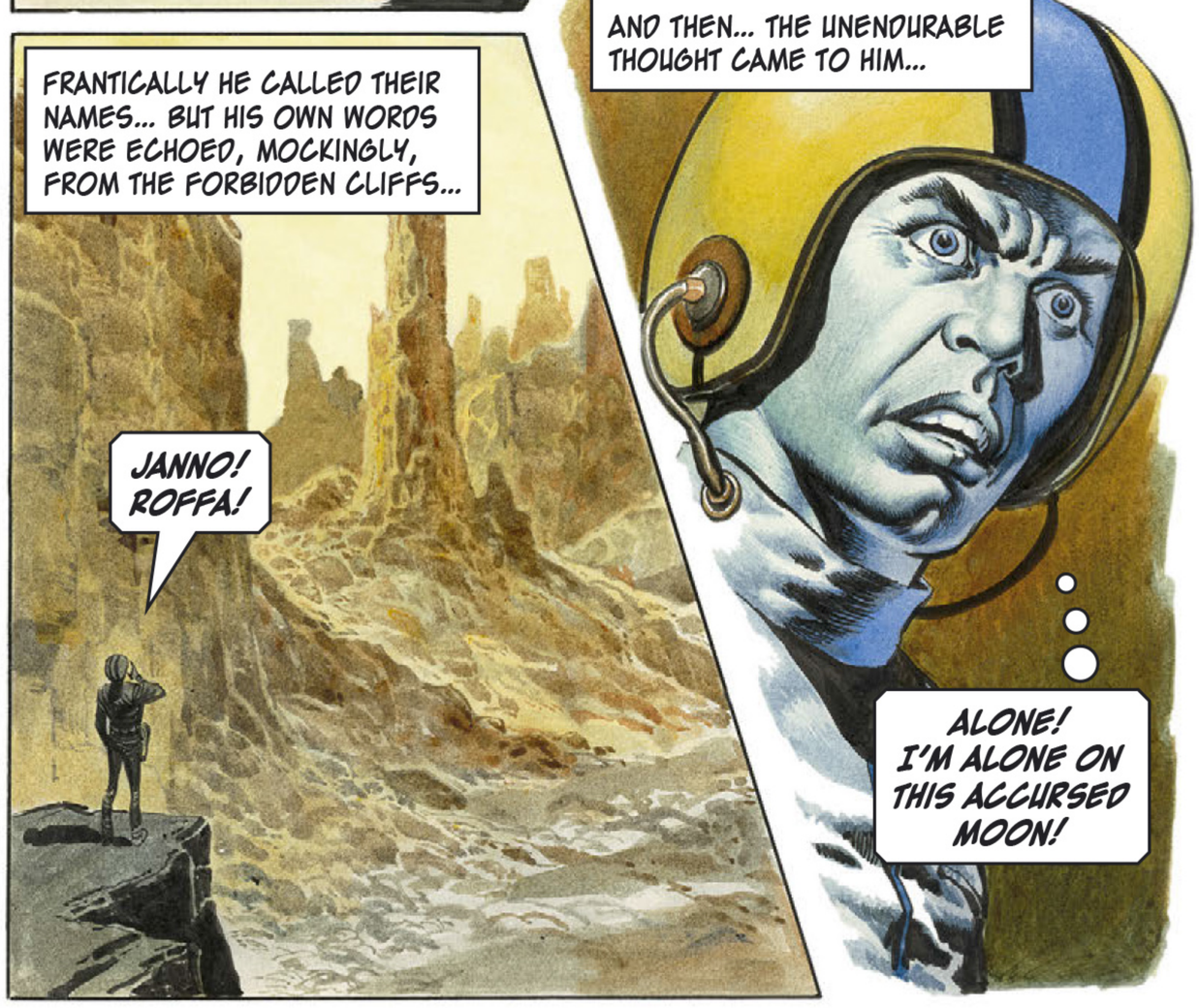
IT CAME FOR THEM OUT OF THE ALL-CONCEALING MIST, ITS FEARSOME TENTACLES GROPING... GROPING...
NO! NO-O-O-O!


SOMEHOW, JANNO FOUND THE WILL TO FIRE HIS WEAPON... BUT THE DISINTEGRATING SHELLS HAD NO EFFECT UPON THEIR MONSTROUS ATTACKER!

AND THEN... THE GALLANT YOUNG TRIGAN WAS SNATCHED UP IN A GRIP FROM WHICH THERE WAS NO ESCAPE...


AT THE SIGHT OF HIS FRIEND'S FATE, KEREN'S NERVE CRACKED. TURNING, HE FLED IN PANIC... STUMBLED... AND FELL HEAVILY...
AAAAGH!


LATER – MUCH LATER – KEREN'S MIND SWAM OUT OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS. THE GREEN MIST HAD CLEARED. HE SAT UP AND GAZED ABOUT HIM IN BLINDING SUNLIGHT...
WHERE... WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

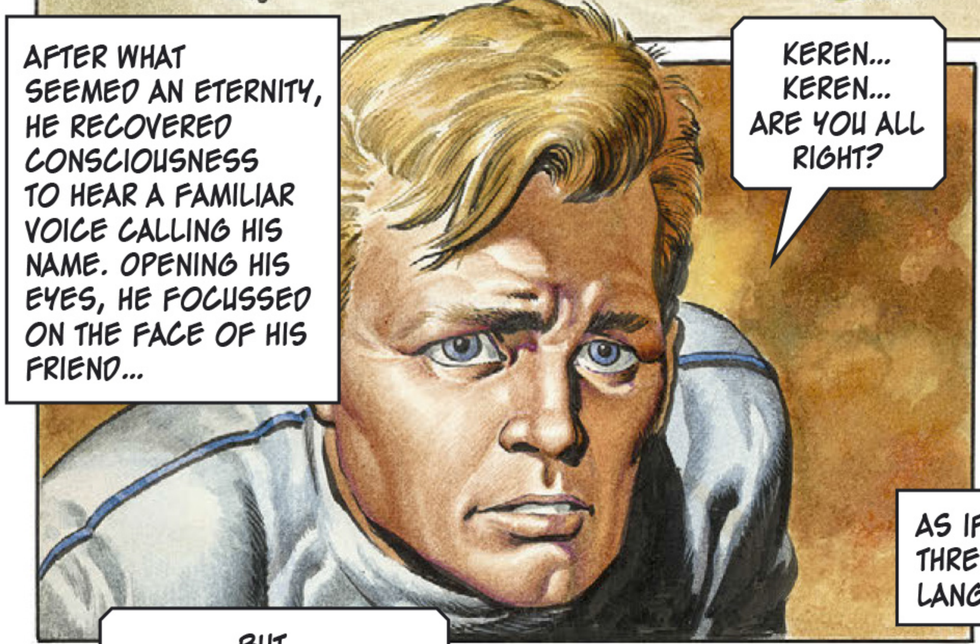

FRANTICALLY HE CALLED THEIR NAMES... BUT HIS OWN WORDS WERE ECHOED, MOCKINGLY, FROM THE FORBIDDEN CLIFFS...
JANNO! ROFFA!
AND THEN... THE UNENDURABLE THOUGHT CAME TO HIM...
ALONE! I'M ALONE ON THIS ACCURSED MOON!

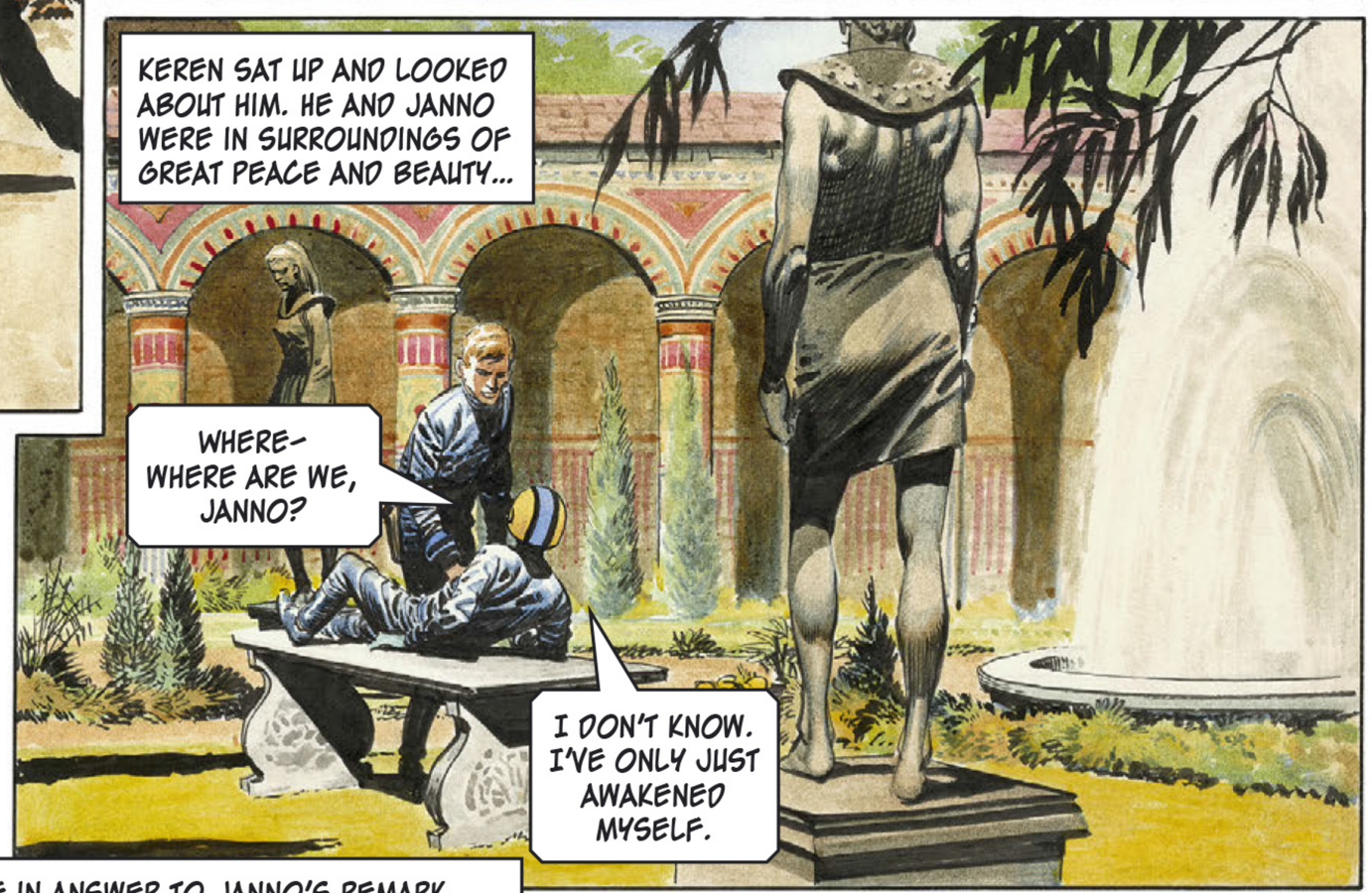
BUT... HE WAS WRONG!
NO!

KEREN TRIED TO WILL HIMSELF TO ESCAPE... BUT HIS LIMBS WERE PARALYSED WITH FEAR...
AAAAAAAAAGH!

HE WAS SNATCHED UP IN A MONSTROUS PAW...
NO! NO-O-O!

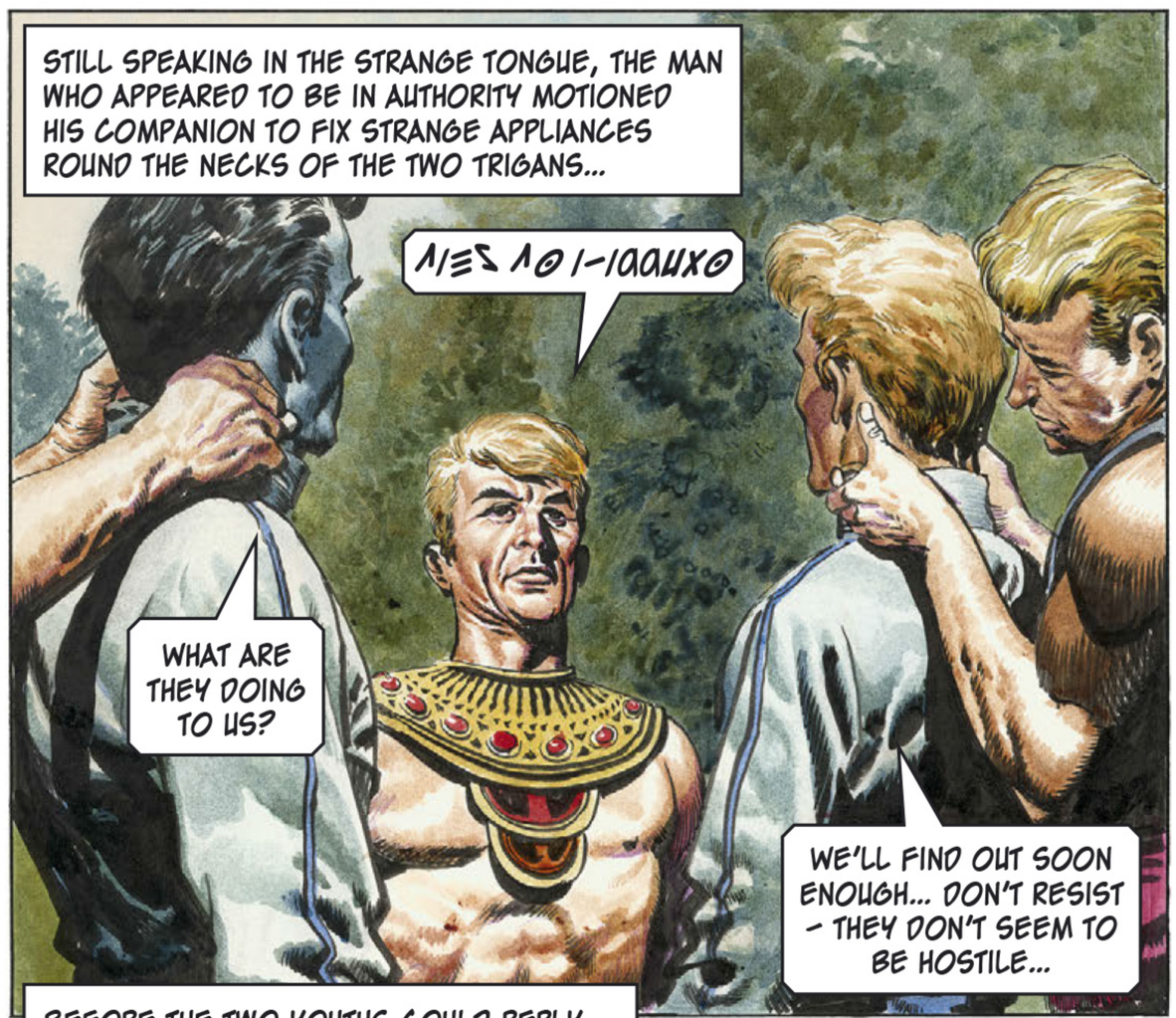
THEN HE WAS IN DARKNESS AND FALLING... FALLING... FALLING...

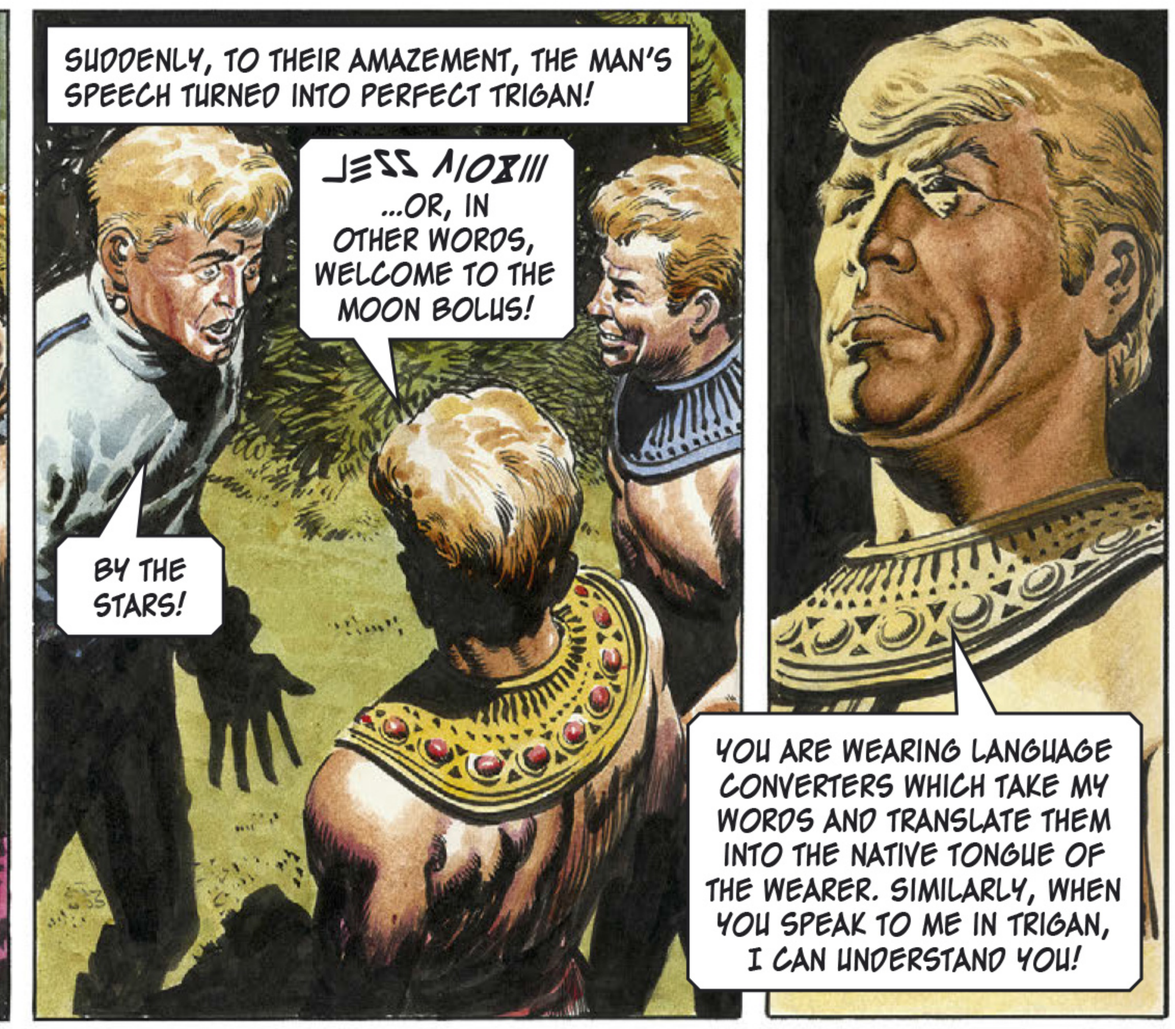

AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN ETERNITY, HE RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS TO HEAR A FAMILIAR VOICE CALLING HIS NAME. OPENING HIS EYES, HE FOCUSSED ON THE FACE OF HIS FRIEND...
KEREN... KEREN... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?


KEREN SAT UP AND LOOKED ABOUT HIM. HE AND JANNO WERE IN SURROUNDINGS OF GREAT PEACE AND BEAUTY...
WHERE- WHERE ARE WE, JANNO?
I DON'T KNOW. I'VE ONLY JUST AWAKENED MYSELF.

BUT... I WAS DEVOURED BY A MONSTROUS CREATURE... AND SO WERE YOU!
YES... AND LIKE YOU, I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS AND AWAKENED IN THIS COURTYARD. AND I STILL HAVEN'T SEEN A LIVING PERSON HERE...

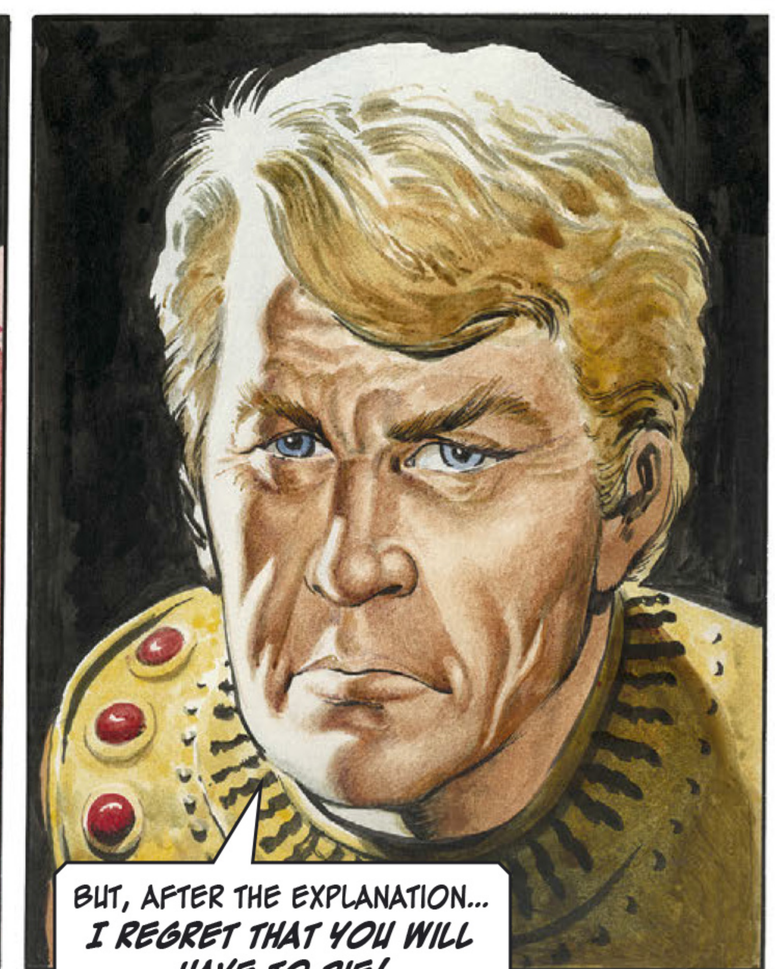
AS IF IN ANSWER TO JANNO'S REMARK, THREE MEN APPEARED AND SPOKE IN A LANGUAGE THEY HAD NEVER HEARD.
ΙΧΝΙΟΥ ΥΙΟ-ΙΣ

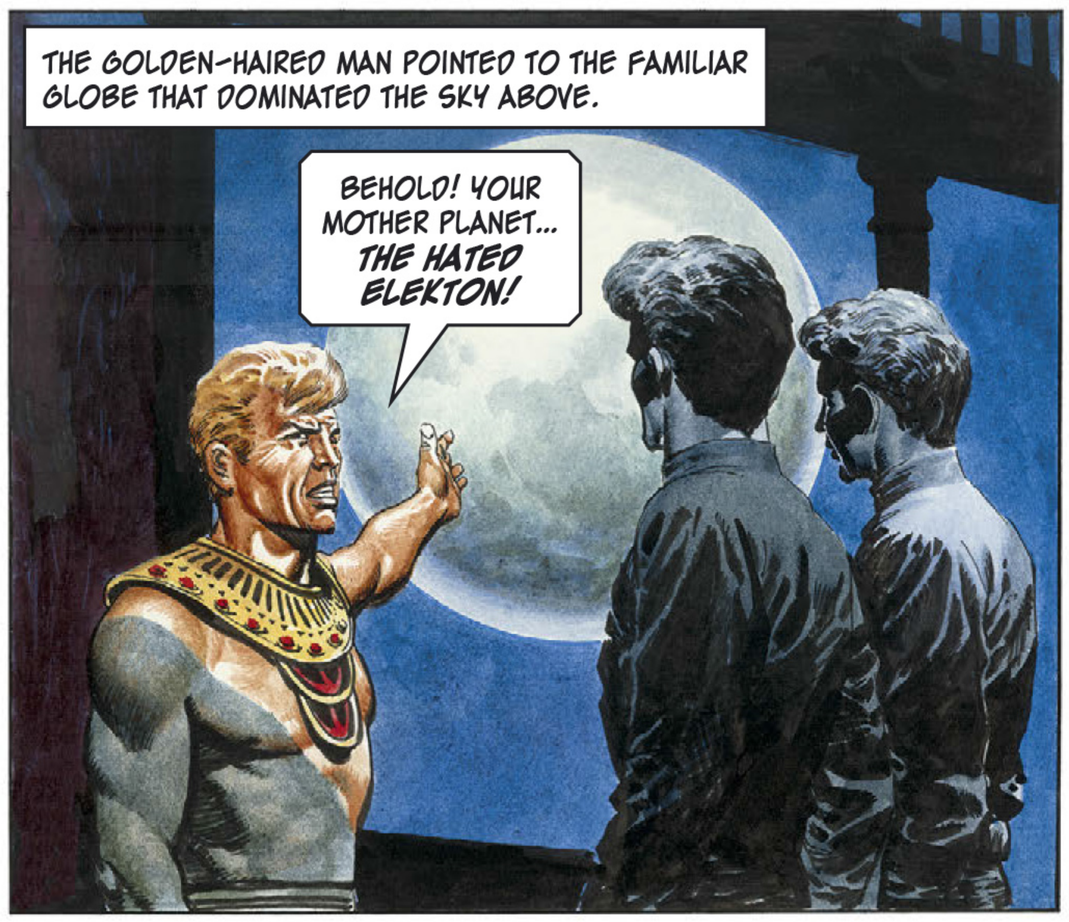

STILL SPEAKING IN THE STRANGE TONGUE, THE MAN WHO APPEARED TO BE IN AUTHORITY MOTIONED HIS COMPANION TO FIX STRANGE APPLIANCES ROUND THE NECKS OF THE TWO TRIGANS...
WHAT ARE THEY DOING TO US?
WE'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH... DON'T RESIST – THEY DON'T SEEM TO BE HOSTILE...


SUDDENLY, TO THEIR AMAZEMENT, THE MAN'S SPEECH TURNED INTO PERFECT TRIGAN!
...OR, IN OTHER WORDS, WELCOME TO THE MOON BOLUS!
BY THE STARS!
YOU ARE WEARING LANGUAGE CONVERTERS WHICH TAKE MY WORDS AND TRANSLATE THEM INTO THE NATIVE TONGUE OF THE WEARER. SIMILARLY, WHEN YOU SPEAK TO ME IN TRIGAN, I CAN UNDERSTAND YOU!

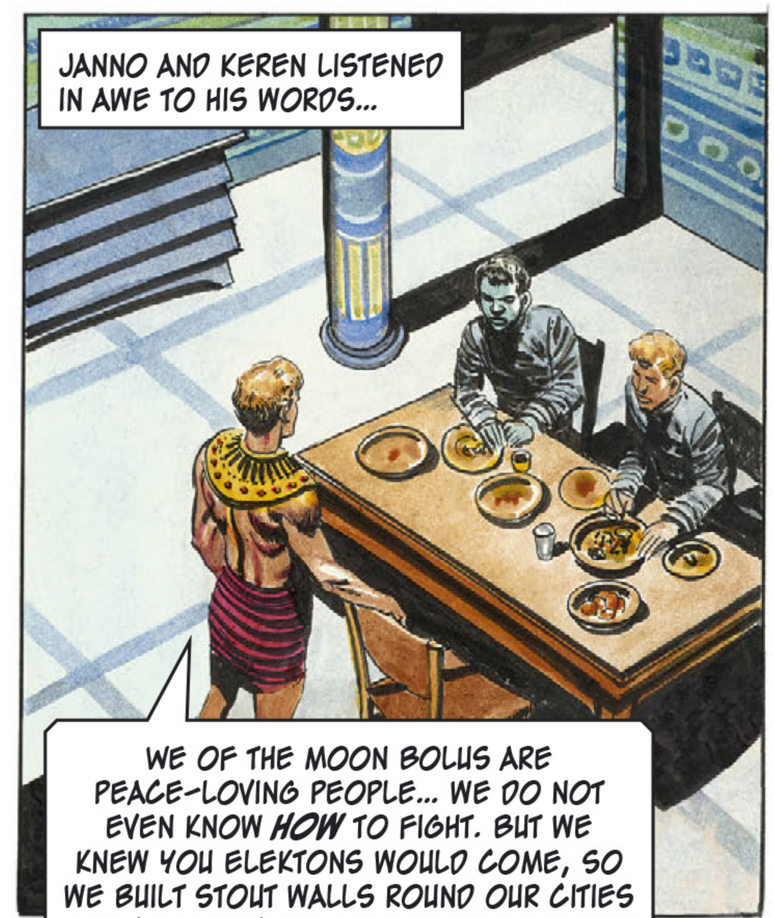
BEFORE THE TWO YOUTHS COULD REPLY, THE GOLDEN-HAIRED MAN MOTIONED THEM TOWARDS AN ARCHWAY IN THE WALL.
I THINK I CAN ANTICIPATE YOUR FIRST QUESTION... COME AND LOOK OUT OF HERE AND YOU WILL BE ANSWERED!
THEY LOOKED OUT. BELOW THEM LAY A HIGH WALLED CITY SQUARE AND IN IT... TWO MONSTROUS FIGURES!
THE TWO MONSTERS!
BUT... THEY'RE NOT LIVING THINGS AT ALL! THEY'RE ROBOTS!

THEIR STRANGE HOSTS SEEMED AMUSED AT THE LADS' ASTONISHMENT. FOOD WAS BROUGHT AND THEY WERE POLITELY BIDDEN TO EAT...
WHILE YOU SATISFY YOUR HUNGER, I WILL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO YOU, FOR WE ON THE MOON BOLUS ARE VERY REASONABLE AND HUMANE PEOPLE...

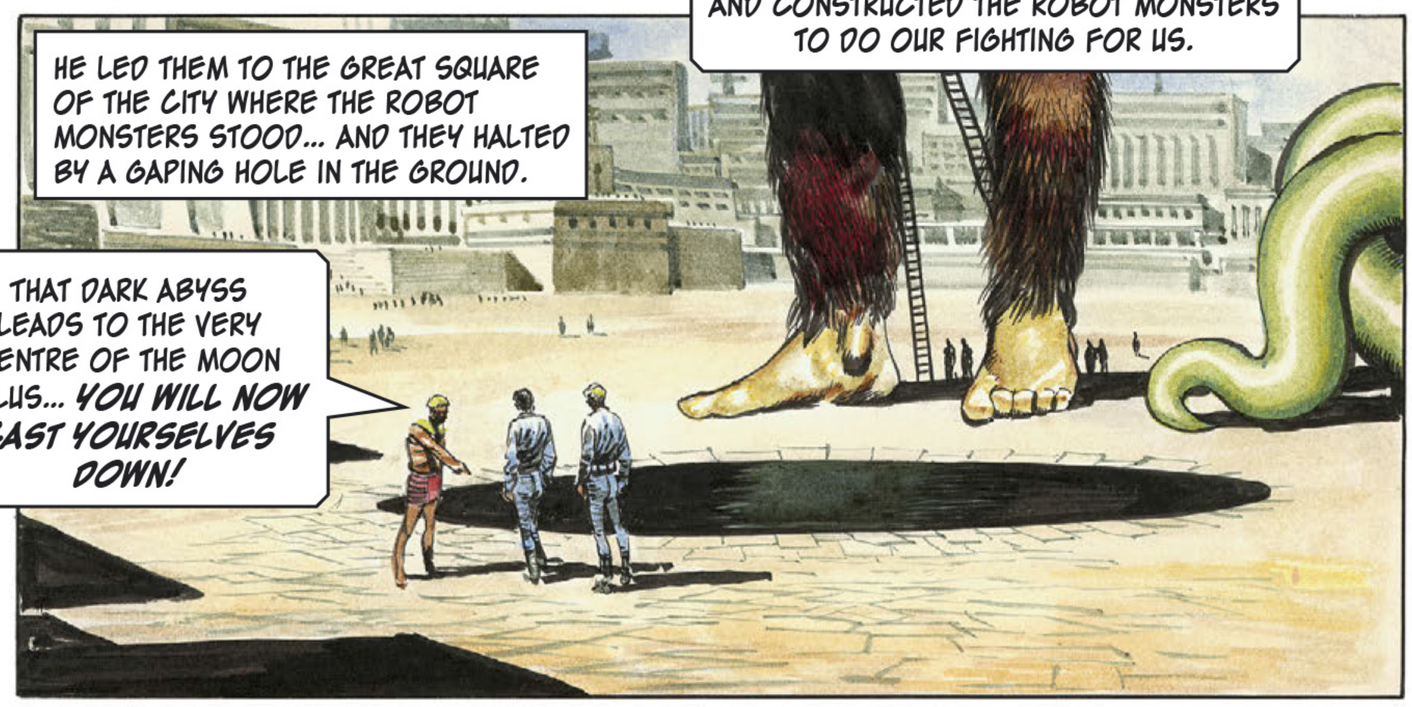

BUT, AFTER THE EXPLANATION... I REGRET THAT YOU WILL HAVE TO DIE!


THE GOLDEN-HAIRED MAN POINTED TO THE FAMILIAR GLOBE THAT DOMINATED THE SKY ABOVE.
BEHOLD! YOUR MOTHER PLANET... THE HATED ELEKTON!

CAN YOU IMAGINE THE TERROR THAT ELEKTON HAS BROUGHT INTO THE HEARTS OF COUNTLESS GENERATIONS OF OUR PEOPLE? FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL WE HAVE KNOWN THAT YOU WOULD ONE DAY INVADE US!

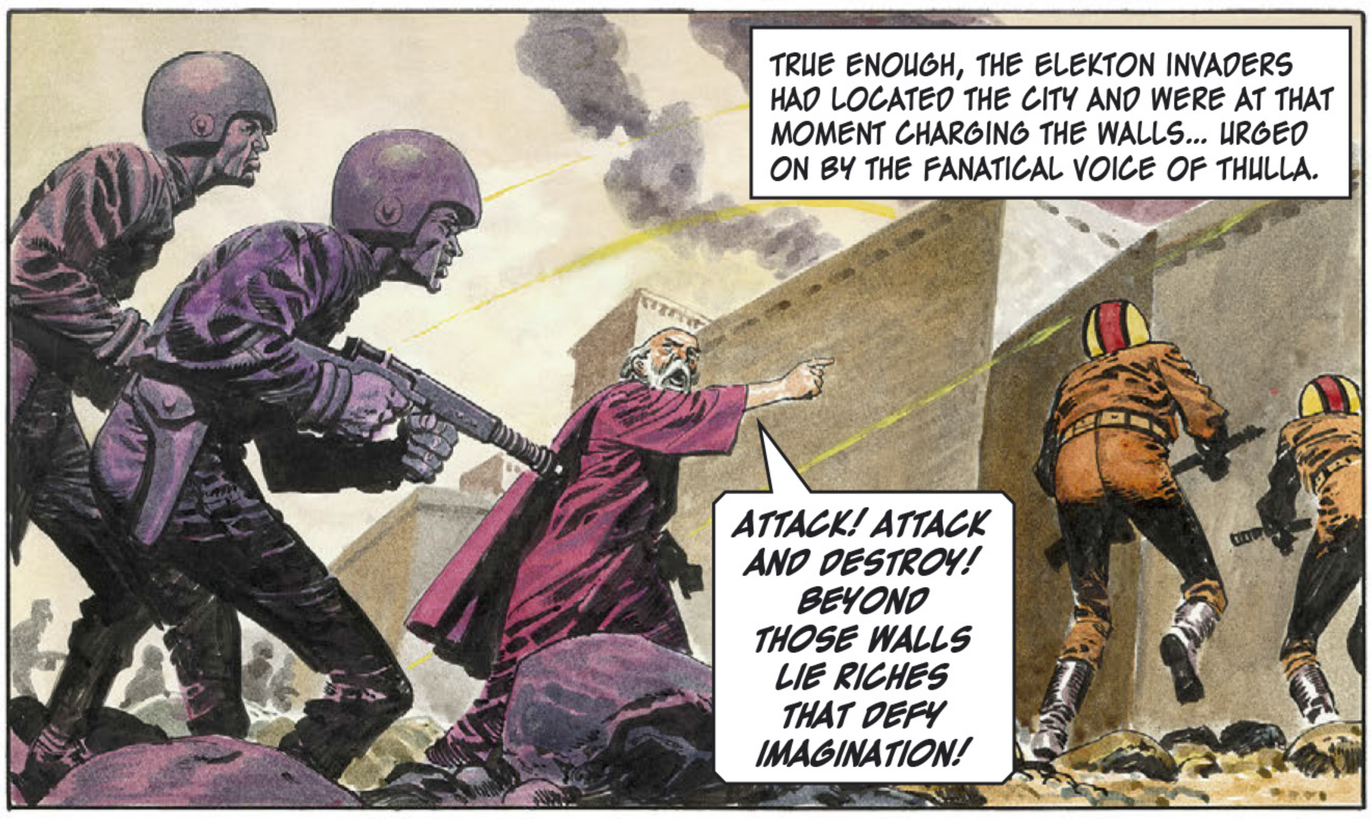

JANNO AND KEREN LISTENED IN AWE TO HIS WORDS...
WE OF THE MOON BOLUS ARE PEACE-LOVING PEOPLE... WE DO NOT EVEN KNOW HOW TO FIGHT. BUT WE KNEW YOU ELEKTONS WOULD COME, SO WE BUILT STOUT WALLS ROUND OUR CITIES AND CONSTRUCTED THE ROBOT MONSTERS TO DO OUR FIGHTING FOR US.

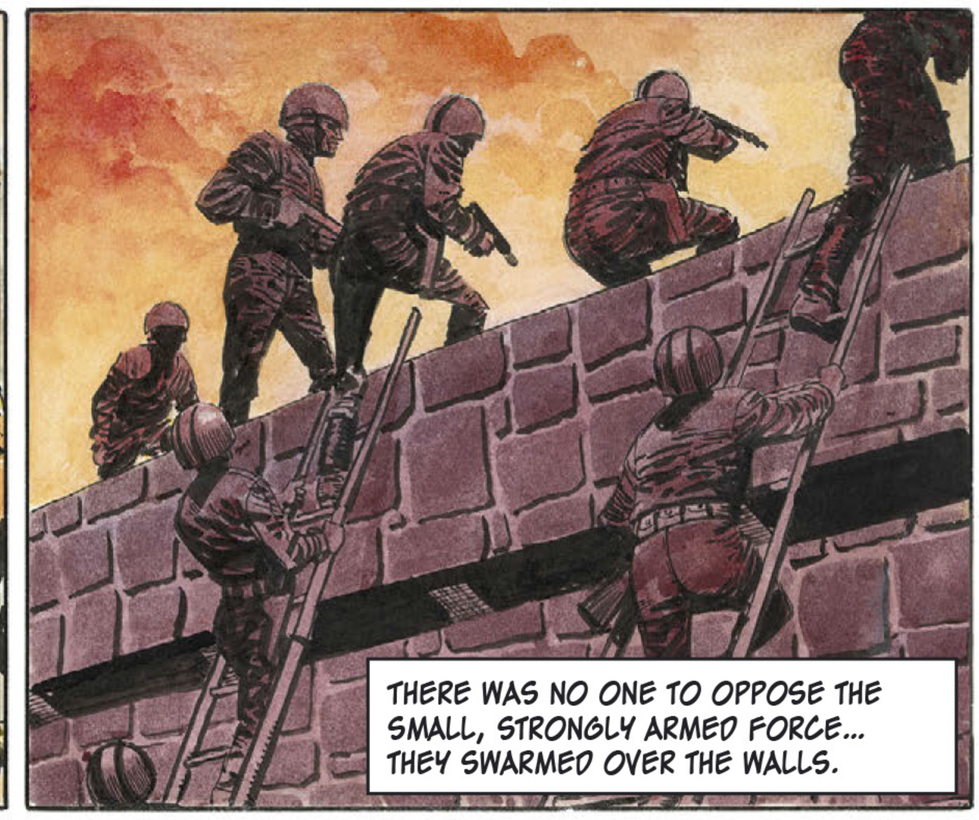
NOW YOU HAVE HEARD EVERYTHING AND, THOUGH I BEAR YOU NO PERSONAL HATRED, YOU MUST DIE! COME WITH ME!


HE LED THEM TO THE GREAT SQUARE OF THE CITY WHERE THE ROBOT MONSTERS STOOD... AND THEY HALTED BY A GAPING HOLE IN THE GROUND.
THAT DARK ABYSS LEADS TO THE VERY CENTRE OF THE MOON BOLUS... YOU WILL NOW CAST YOURSELVES DOWN!

AT THIS TERIFYING ORDER, JANNO AND KEREN EXCHANGED ALARMED GLANCES. AND THEN... IT HAPPENED!... WHOOOMPH!
AAAAAGH!
BY THE STARS!

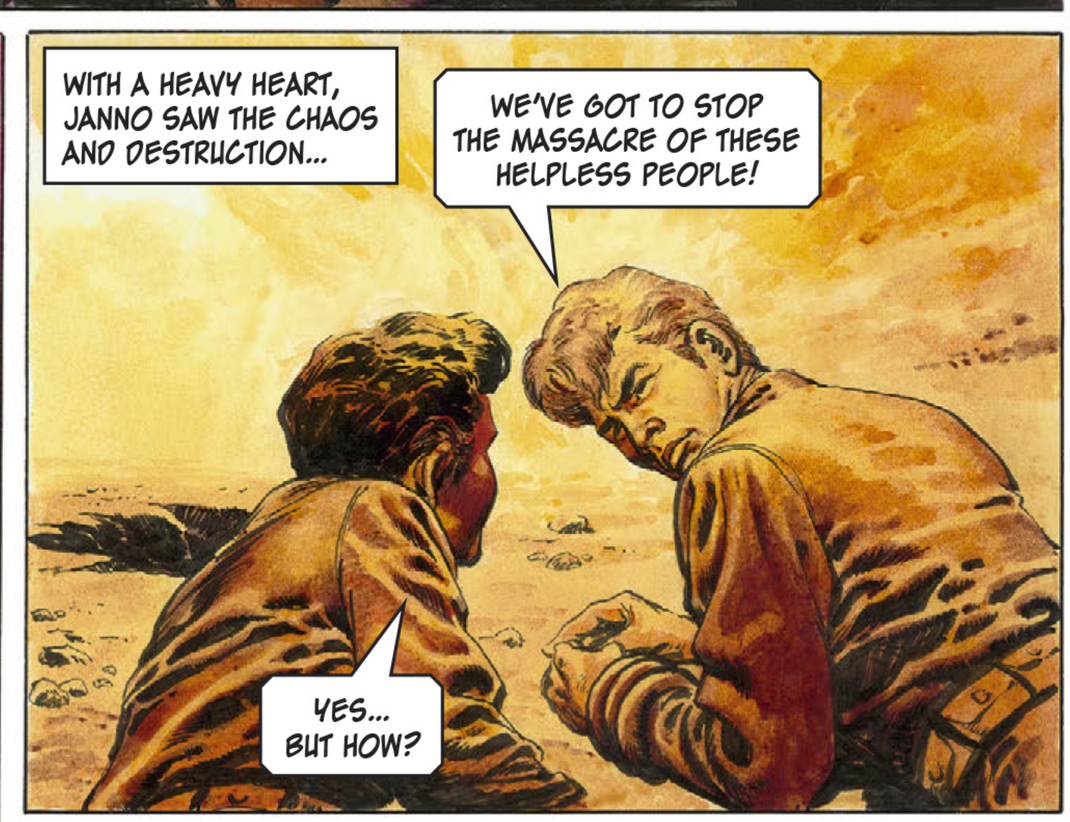
THEY THREW THEMSELVES FLAT, AS THE VERY AIR SEEMED TO EXPLODE ALL ROUND THEM.
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE EXPLANATION... OUR COMRADES HAVE ARRIVED!


TRUE ENOUGH, THE ELEKTON INVADERS HAD LOCATED THE CITY AND WERE AT THAT MOMENT CHARGING THE WALLS... URGED ON BY THE FANATICAL VOICE OF THULLA.
ATTACK! ATTACK AND DESTROY! BEYOND THOSE WALLS LIE RICHES THAT DEFY IMAGINATION!


THERE WAS NO ONE TO OPPOSE THE SMALL, STRONGLY ARMED FORCE... THEY SWARMED OVER THE WALLS.

THE UNWARLIKE CITIZENS FLED IN BLIND PANIC.

THE FEARSOME ROBOT MONSTERS, UPON WHICH THE PEOPLE OF BOLUS HAD STAKED THEIR SAFETY, WERE NEVER BROUGHT INTO ACTION.
TAKE NO PRISONERS! DESTROY EVERY LIVING THING!

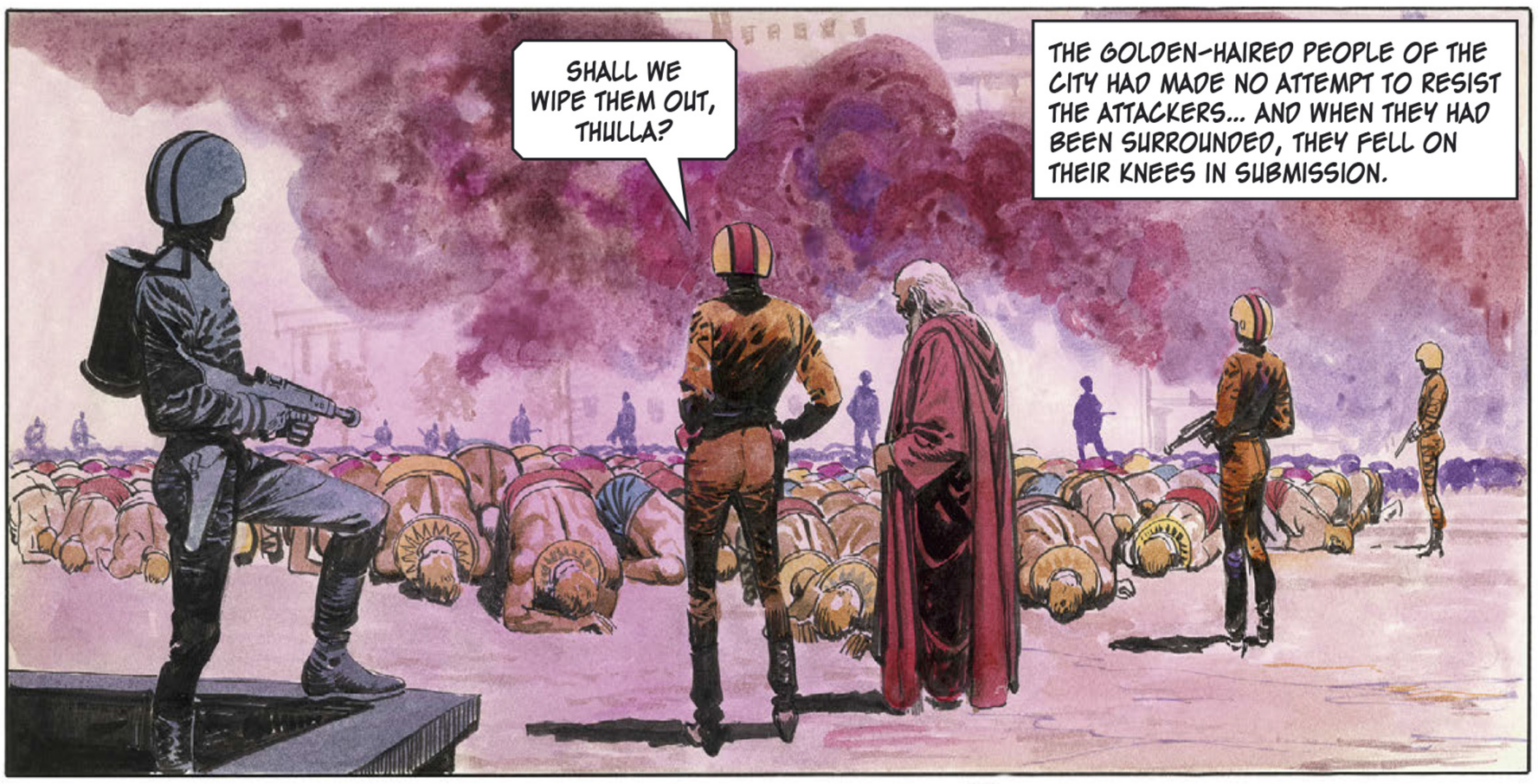

WITH A HEAVY HEART, JANNO SAW THE CHAOS AND DESTRUCTION...
WE'VE GOT TO STOP THE MASSACRE OF THESE HELPLESS PEOPLE!
YES... BUT HOW?

RAISING HIMSELF TO HIS FEET, THE GALLANT YOUNG TRIGAN CALLED OUT TO THE ADVANCING INVADERS...
STOP FIRING! THESE PEOPLE WON'T FIGHT BACK... THE CITY'S YOURS FOR THE TAKING!

AND THEN... HE HIMSELF WAS STRUCK DOWN!
JANNO!

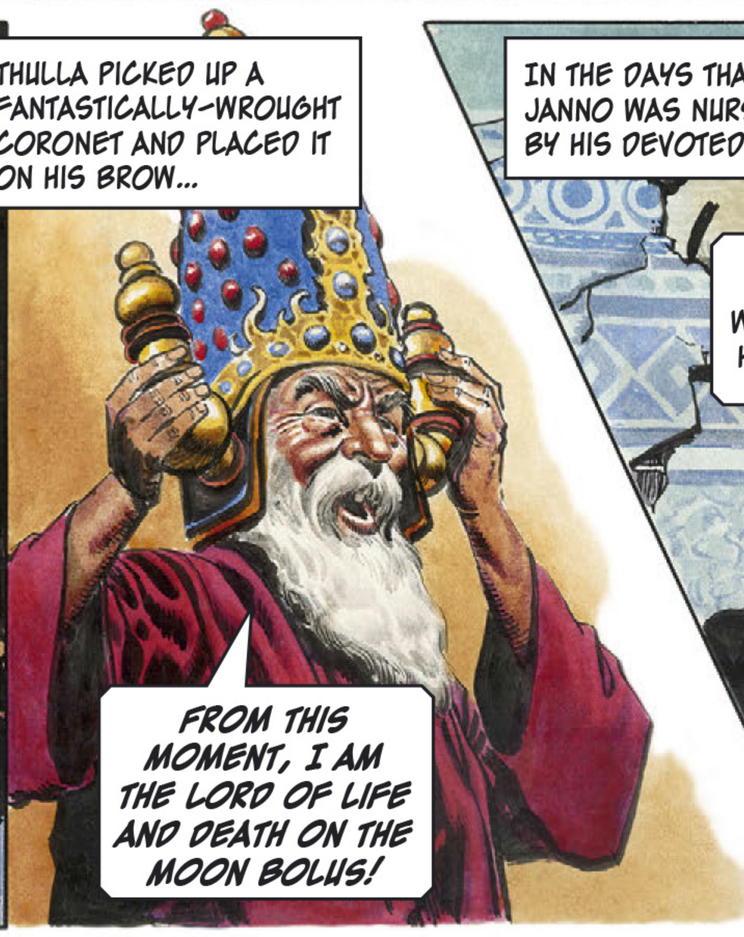
WHILE THE VICTORIOUS ELEKTONS SWEPT PAST THROUGH THE BATTLE SMOKE, KEREN CROUCHED BY HIS STRICKEN FRIEND...
JANNO! THANK THE STARS, HE STILL LIVES!

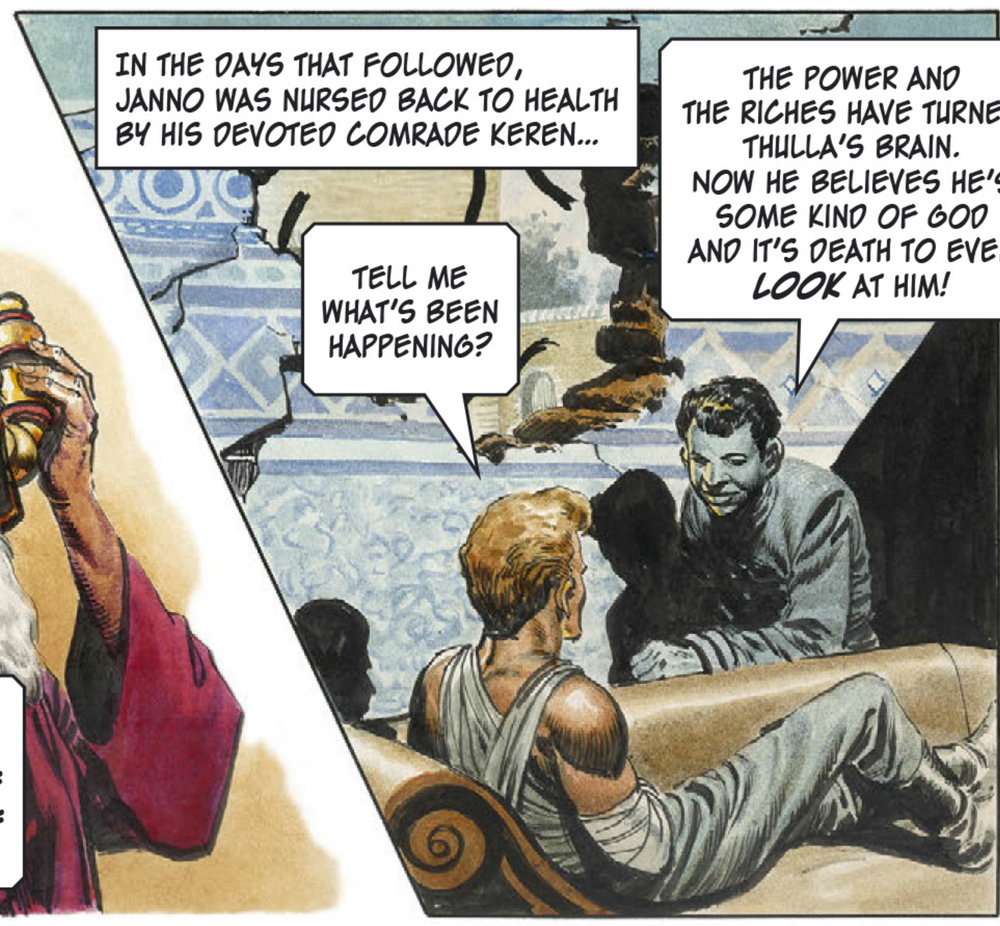
HE'LL NOT DIE... NOT IF I CAN HELP IT...


SHALL WE WIPE THEM OUT, THULLA?
THE GOLDEN-HAIRED PEOPLE OF THE CITY HAD MADE NO ATTEMPT TO RESIST THE ATTACKERS... AND WHEN THEY HAD BEEN SURROUNDED, THEY FELL ON THEIR KNEES IN SUBMISSION.

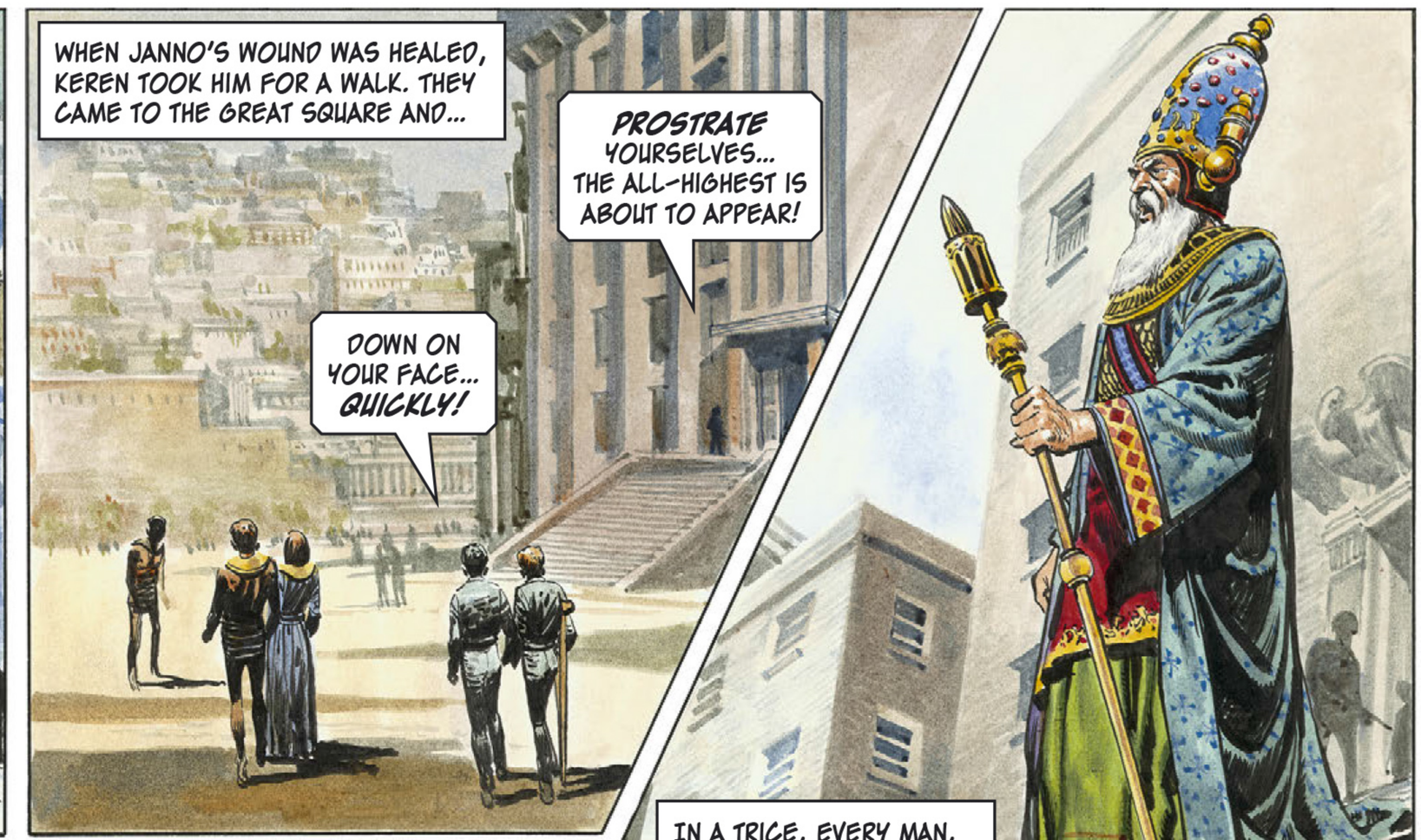
NO... SPARE THEM. FROM NOW ON THEY WILL BE OUR SLAVES!

THE ELEKTONS EXPLORED THE CITY. THEY CAME TO A VAST TREASURE HOUSE PACKED WITH RICHES BEYOND ALL IMAGINING...
LOOK AT IT! AND IT'S OURS... ALL OURS!


THULLA PICKED UP A FANTASTICALLY-WROUGHT CORONET AND PLACED IT ON HIS BROW...
FROM THIS MOMENT, I AM THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH ON THE MOON BOLUS!


IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, JANNO WAS NURSED BACK TO HEALTH BY HIS DEVOTED COMRADE KEREN...
TELL ME WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?
THE POWER AND THE RICHES HAVE TURNED THULLA'S BRAIN. NOW HE BELIEVES HE'S SOME KIND OF GOD AND IT'S DEATH TO EVEN LOOK AT HIM!

THROUGH THE SHELLED RUINS THEY COULD SEE THEIR MOTHER PLANET...
AND TO THINK WE MUST STAY HERE FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES... NEVER TO SET FOOT ON ELEKTON AGAIN!


WHEN JANNO'S WOUND WAS HEALED, KEREN TOOK HIM FOR A WALK. THEY CAME TO THE GREAT SQUARE AND...
DOWN ON YOUR FACE... QUICKLY!
PROSTRATE YOURSELVES... THE ALL-HIGHEST IS ABOUT TO APPEAR!
IN A TRICE, EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN THAT VAST SQUARE LAY FACE-DOWNWARDS. AND IN THE DEATHLY SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED... HE CAME!

ONE MAN CHANCED TO RAISE HIS HEAD SLIGHTLY AND THULLA SAW THE MOVEMENT... HIS VOICE ROSE IN A SCREAM OF FURY!
HE HAS GAZED UPON THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH... DESTROY HIM!

THE UNFORTUNATE WRETCH PAID SWIFTLY... AND DEARLY!
EEEEEH!

MEANWHILE, ACROSS THE VOID OF SPACE ON THE PLANET ELEKTON...

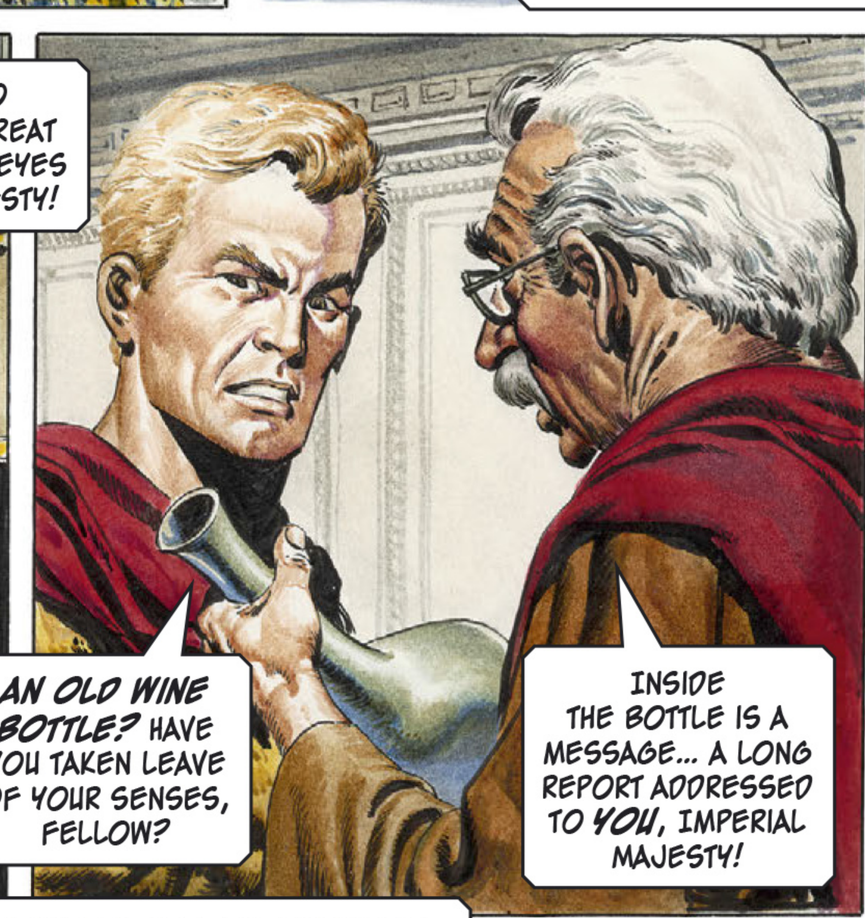
...IN THE MARKET PLACE OF AN OBSCURE LITTLE TOWN ON THE BORDERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, SOMETHING WAS JUST ABOUT TO HAPPEN... SOMETHING WHICH WAS TO HAVE SHATTERING CONSEQUENCES...
THAT CURIOUSLY-SHAPED WINE BOTTLE INTERESTS ME... HOW MUCH?
AAAH, MASTER... NOW THERE'S A VERY INTERESTING STORY CONNECTED WITH THAT BOTTLE... LISTEN...
IT WAS THE BOTTLE CONTAINING JANNO'S LAST MESSAGE TO THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS!

SOME DAYS LATER, A STRANGER PRESENTED HIMSELF AT THE GATES OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE IN TRIGAN CITY...
I TELL YOU IT'S NOT PERMITTED FOR ALL AND SUNDRY TO DEMAND AN IMMEDIATE AUDIENCE WITH THE EMPEROR!
AND I TELL YOU THAT THE EMPEROR WILL HAVE YOUR LIFE WHEN HE LEARNS YOU HAVE DELAYED ME SEEING HIM!

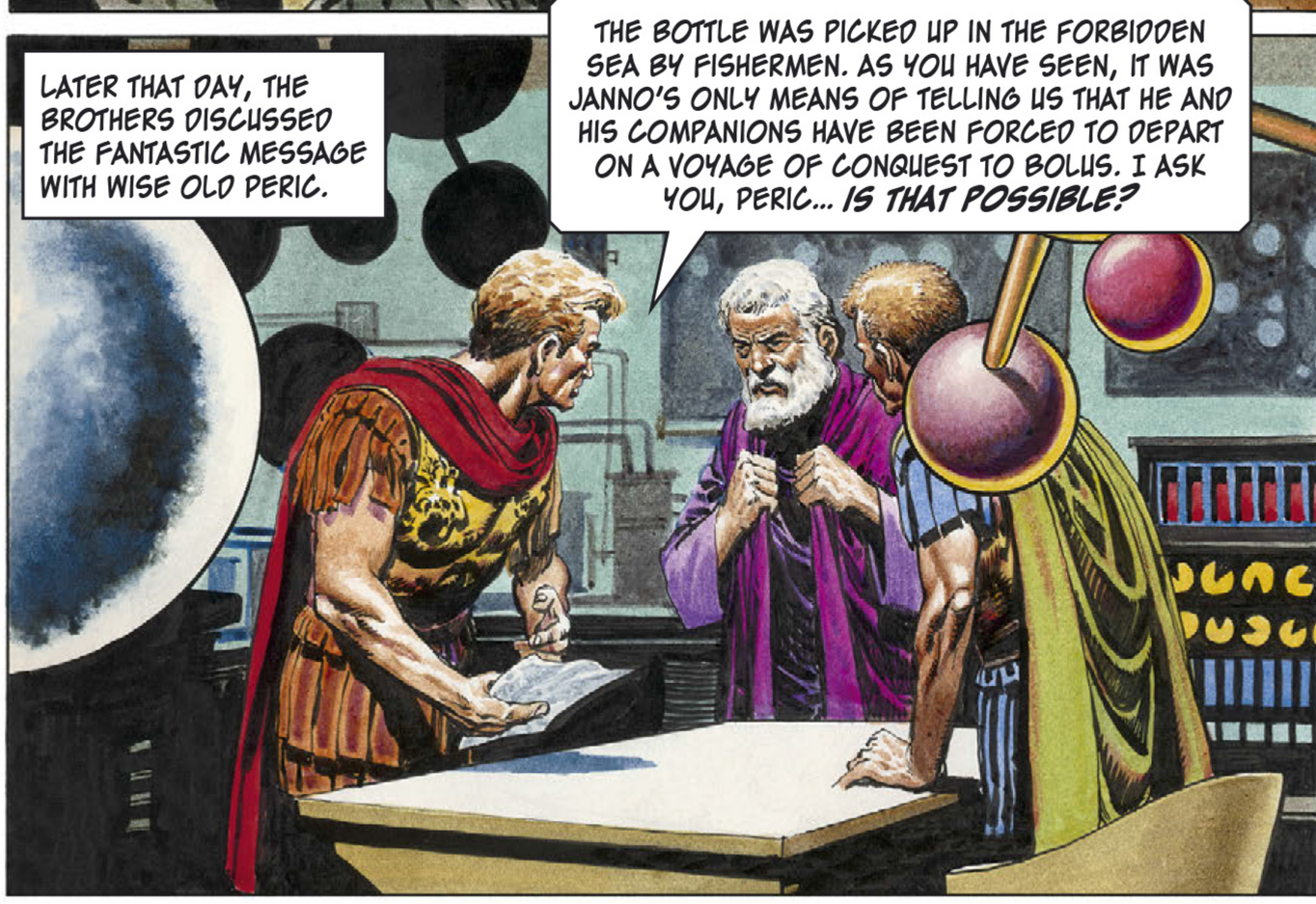
THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS IN HIS STUDY. WITH HIM WAS HIS BROTHER, BRAG...
IT'S NO USE, BRAG... YOU MUST PUT AWAY YOUR GRIEF AND ACCEPT THE FACT THAT YOUNG JANNO IS LOST FOR EVER!

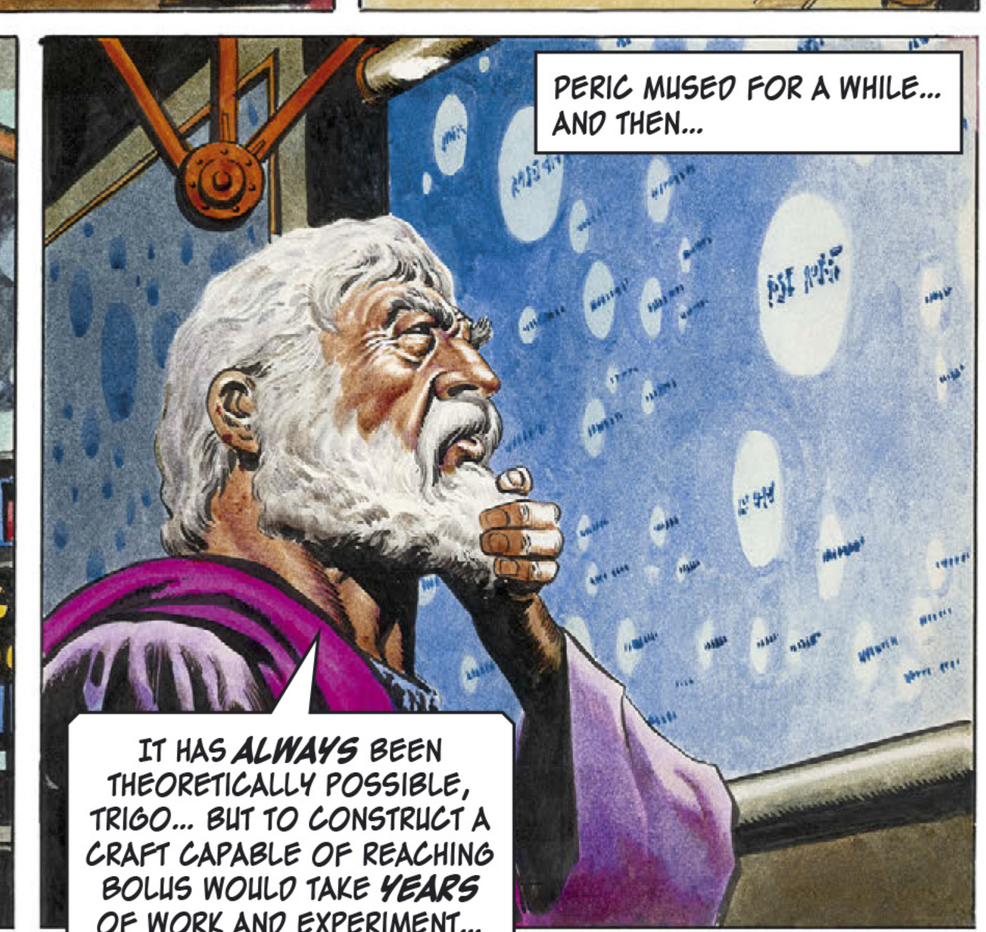
A LONG TIME HAD PASSED SINCE BRAG'S ONLY SON HAD FAILED TO RETURN FROM PATROL IN A CRAFT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET.
IT'S THE UNCERTAINTY... THE THOUGHT THAT HE MAY STILL BE ALIVE... HURT, MAYBE... AND IN TERRIBLE DANGER...

THE BROTHERS' GRIEF WAS INTERRUPTED BY THE ENTRANCE OF THE OFFICER OF THE GUARD AND THE STRANGER.
THIS MAN CLAIMS TO HAVE SOMETHING OF GREAT IMPORTANCE FOR YOUR EYES ALONE, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
WELL?
I HAVE... THIS, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!


AN OLD WINE BOTTLE? HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES, FELLOW?
INSIDE THE BOTTLE IS A MESSAGE... A LONG REPORT ADDRESSED TO YOU, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!

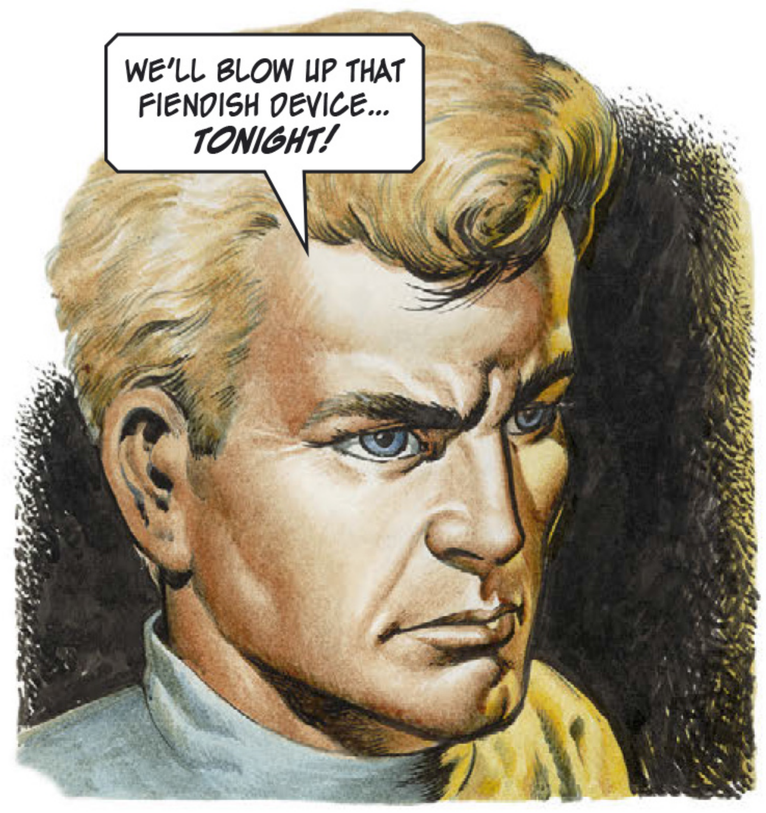
TRIGO TOOK THE MESSAGE FROM THE BOTTLE... AND ONE GLANCE BROUGHT A CRY OF ASTONISHMENT TO HIS LIPS!
BY ALL THE STARS... IT'S FROM JANNO!
JANNO?


LATER THAT DAY, THE BROTHERS DISCUSSED THE FANTASTIC MESSAGE WITH WISE OLD PERIC.
THE BOTTLE WAS PICKED UP IN THE FORBIDDEN SEA BY FISHERMEN. AS YOU HAVE SEEN, IT WAS JANNO'S ONLY MEANS OF TELLING US THAT HE AND HIS COMPANIONS HAVE BEEN FORCED TO DEPART ON A VOYAGE OF CONQUEST TO BOLUS. I ASK YOU, PERIC... IS THAT POSSIBLE?


PERIC MUSED FOR A WHILE... AND THEN...
IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE, TRIGO... BUT TO CONSTRUCT A CRAFT CAPABLE OF REACHING BOLUS WOULD TAKE YEARS OF WORK AND EXPERIMENT...

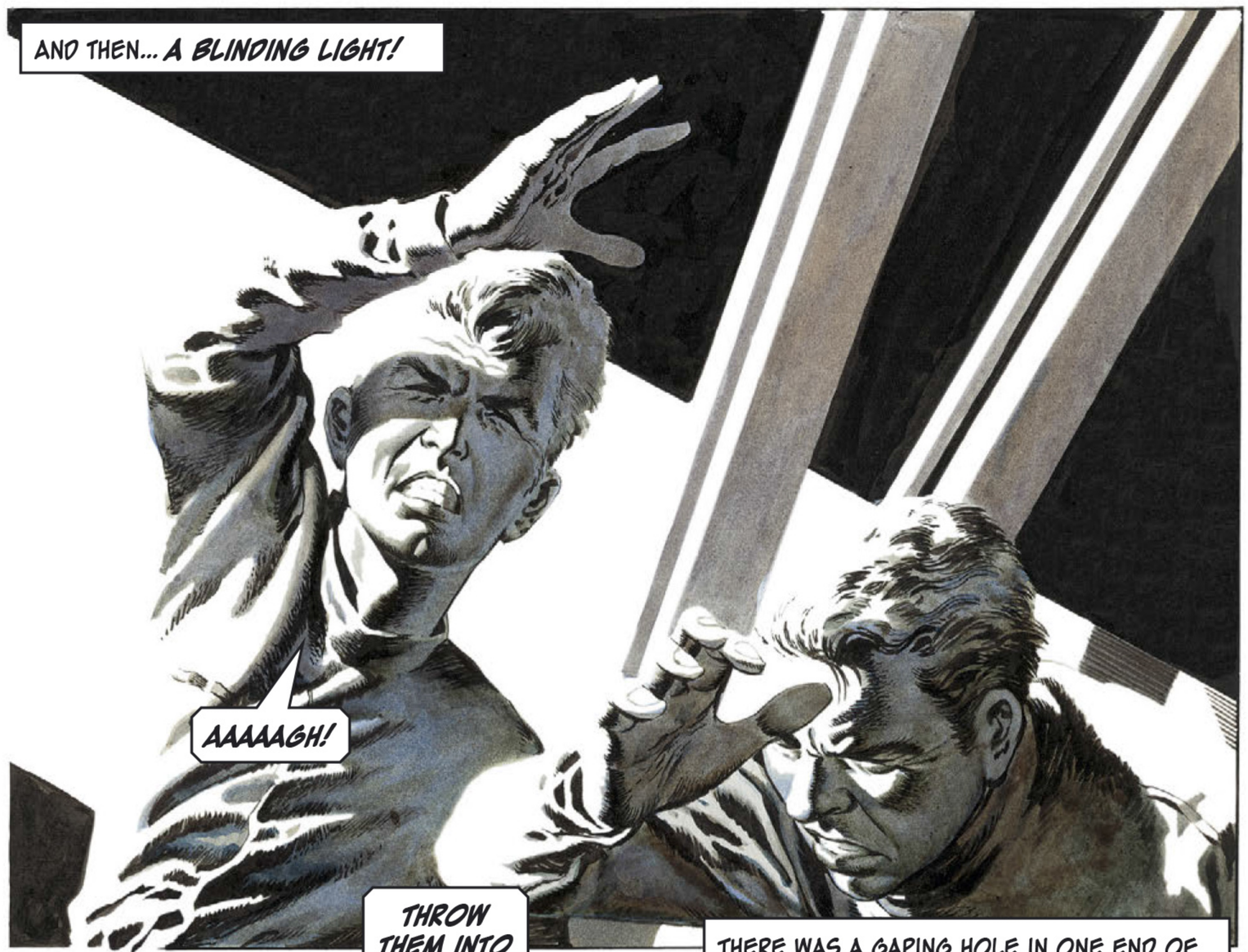
THE EMPEROR'S ANSWER WAS IMMEDIATE... AND COMMANDING!
YOU WILL CONSTRUCT SUCH A CRAFT, PERIC... AND INSTEAD OF YEARS, I GIVE YOU MONTHS!
MEANWHILE, ACROSS THE AIRLESS WASTE THAT SEPARATED THE MOTHER PLANET ELEKTON FROM THE NEARER OF ITS TWO MOONS...
...IN HIS CAPTURED PALACE, THE FANATICAL THULLA WAS ADDRESSING THE HANDFUL OF LIEUTENANTS WHO ALONE WERE ALLOWED TO GAZE UPON THE "LORD OF LIGHT AND DEATH"... AND LIVE.
BOLUS IS MINE, AND ALL WHO CAME HERE WITH ME WILL LIVE OUT THEIR LIVES AS MY SUBJECTS! MAKE NO MISTAKE... NONE OF US WILL EVER RETURN TO ELEKTON!
FROM NOW ON, THE INHABITANTS OF ELEKTON ARE OUR POTENTIAL ENEMIES! LIKE THE GOLDEN-HAIRED NATIVES OF BOLUS BEFORE US, WE SHALL LIVE IN CONSTANT THREAT OF INVASION FROM THE MOTHER PLANET... AND SO...
...I HAVE DEVISED A WEAPON OF SUCH COLOSSAL DESTRUCTIVE FORCE THAT WE SHALL BE ABLE TO RID OURSELVES FOR EVER OF THAT THREAT. HERE IS THE PLAN OF MY WEAPON...
...WITH IT, WE SHALL DESTROY ALL LIFE ON ELEKTON!

IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, AN ARMY OF GOLDEN-HAIRED SLAVES LABOURED TO BUILD A MASSIVE CONSTRUCTION IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF THE CITY.
JANNO AND HIS COMRADE KEREN HAD WATCHED THE THING TAKING SHAPE WITH GROWING CONCERN...
SOME DEMON'S WORK'S AFOOT... SOME FIENDISH IDEA FROM THE TWISTED MIND OF THULLA!
ALWAYS, WHEN THEY QUESTIONED ONE OF THULLA'S TRUSTED, ORANGE-CLAD GUARDS, THEY GOT THE SAME ANSWER.
IT'S BEING BUILT BY ORDER OF THE ALL-HIGHEST! THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW!
JANNO AND KEREN OBEYED WITH THE OTHERS. SAVE FOR THULLA'S TRUSTED LIEUTENANTS, IT WAS DEATH TO GAZE UPON "THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH"...
SUDDENLY...
THE DISINTEGRATOR PROGRESSES WELL! WITHIN A FEW DAYS IT WILL BE READY FOR TRIAL!
PROSTRATE YOURSELVES... THE ALL-HIGHEST APPROACHES!
THULLA'S VOICE ROSE TO A FANATICAL SCREECH...
THEN WE WILL BEGIN THE TASK OF DESTROYING ALL LIFE ON ELEKTON... SO THAT WE SHALL BE SAFE FOR EVER ON THIS MOON OF MINE! SAFE TILL ETERNITY!
THE FANTASTICALLY-GARBED FIGURE MOVED ON... AND THE TWO COMRADES EXCHANGED GRIM GLANCES.
SO... NOW WE KNOW!
THULLA'S TAKEN LEAVE OF HIS SENSES! DESTROY ALL LIFE ON ELEKTON? IT'S UNBELIEVABLE!
LATER, THEY HELD A COUNCIL-OF-WAR...
WE'VE GOT TO STOP THIS MADNESS!
BUT HOW? WE'RE OUTNUMBERED BY THULLA'S GUARDS... THE REST OF THE ELEKTONS ARE SCARCELY MORE THAN PRISONERS.


WE'LL BLOW UP THAT FIENDISH DEVICE... TONIGHT!

THEIR BELOVED MOTHER PLANET WAS GLOWING IN THE NIGHT SKY AS THE INTREPID PAIR CREPT SILENTLY ACROSS THE CITY SQUARE.

REACHING THE TOWERING SHAPE, THEY FASTENED TO ITS BASE AN EXPLOSIVE CHARGE WHICH THEY HAD PREPARED.
THIS WILL BRING THE WHOLE THING CRASHING DOWN!
WHAT- WHAT WAS THAT?


AND THEN... A BLINDING LIGHT!
AAAAAGH!

NEXT INSTANT, THEY WERE STRUGGLING IN THE GRASP OF THULLA'S BRUTAL GUARDS!
THEY WERE ATTEMPTING TO BLOW IT UP!
THROW THEM INTO THE PIT!

THERE WAS A GAPING HOLE IN ONE END OF THE SQUARE. ACCORDING TO LEGEND, IT LED TO THE VERY CENTRE OF THE MOON. JANNO AND KEREN WERE DRAGGED TOWARDS IT...
TREACHEROUS ANIMALS... IN WITH THEM!

THULLA'S MERCILESS GUARDS HURLED JANNO AND KEREN HEADLONG INTO THE YAWNING ABYSS.
DOWN... DOWN... DOWN...
AND THEN... THEY STRUCK WATER... AND WERE DRIVEN DEEP BY THE FORCE OF THE IMPACT!
WITH LUNGS NEARLY AT BURSTING POINT, THEIR HEADS BROKE SURFACE... AND THEY LOOKED ABOUT THEM, SCARCELY ABLE TO BELIEVE THEIR GOOD FORTUNE.
SO THIS PIT DOESN'T REACH TO THE CENTRE OF THE MOON AFTER ALL!
IN THE LONG HOURS THAT FOLLOWED, THE LEVEL OF WATER SLOWLY DROPPED AND CARRIED THEM DEEPER AND DEEPER DOWN THE PIT, TILL AT LENGTH...
LOOK!
A TUNNEL... PERHAPS IT'S A WAY OUT!
THE WATER SANK LOWER TO REVEAL A WIDE CAVERN... AND BEYOND THAT... DAYLIGHT!
WE'RE SAVED!
THEY SWAM THE LONG LENGTH OF THE CAVERN, AND SAW A VAST STRETCH OF WATER WITH TOWERING PEAKS BEYOND.
IT LOOKS LIKE AN INLAND SEA...
THEY CLAMBERED OUT ON TO A ROCKY LEDGE, AND LOOKED ABOUT THEM IN AWE AT THE FORBIDDING ROCK WALLS.
BY THE STARS! IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG CLIMB OUT OF HERE!
THEN LET'S GET STARTED!

NIGHT CAME, AND DAY FOLLOWED. ON THE DAWN OF THE SECOND DAY, THULLA STOOD ON THE BALCONY OF HIS PALACE AND LOOKED ACROSS AT THE FIENDISH CONSTRUCTION TOWERING ABOVE THE CITY SQUARE.

THE DISINTEGRATOR IS READY FOR TESTING, ALL-HIGHNESS!

EXCELLENT... *SEND THE FIRST SHOCK WAVE TO ELEKTON!*

THE ORDER WAS PASSED TO THE CREW OF THE DISINTEGRATOR. THE FACE OF THE ENORMOUS DISC WAS TURNED TOWARDS THE PLANET ELEKTON... AND A SEARING RAY OF GREEN LIGHT STABBED INTO THE SKY!

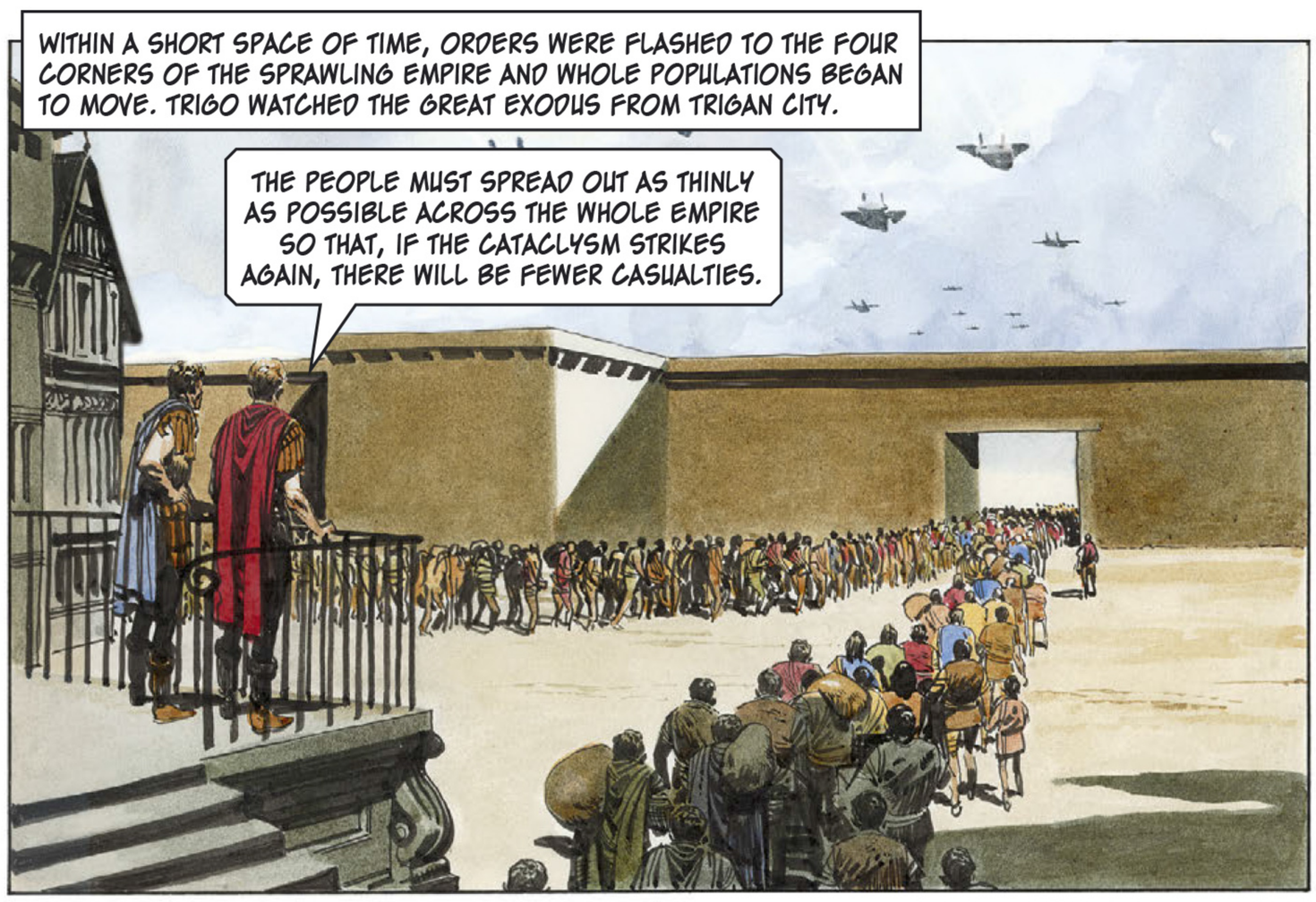
DURING THIS TIME, JANNO AND KEREN HAD SUCCEEDED IN CLIMBING THE DIZZY ROCK FACE, AND REACHED A HIGH PEAK OVERLOOKING THE CITY AT THAT FATEFUL MOMENT...

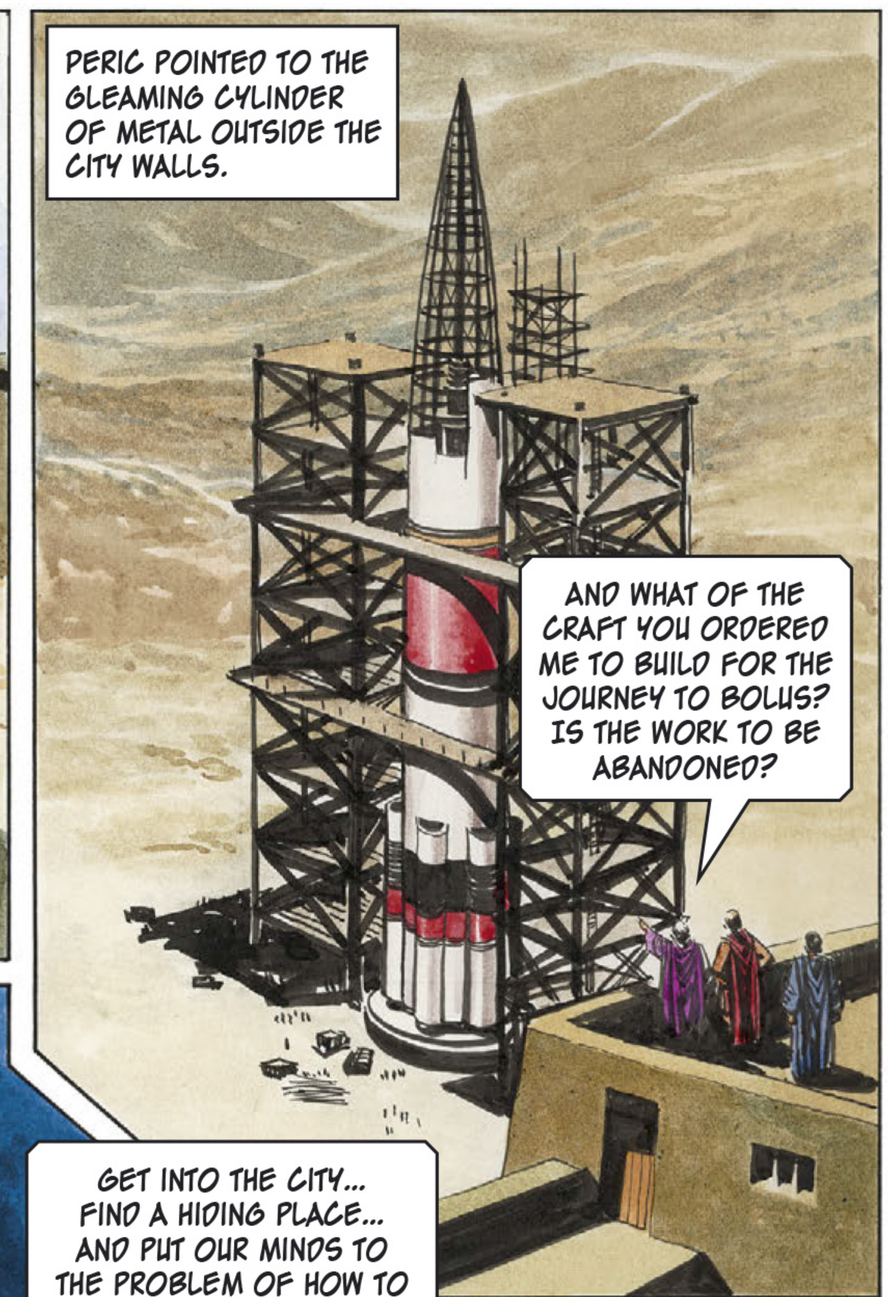
KEREN... LOOK!

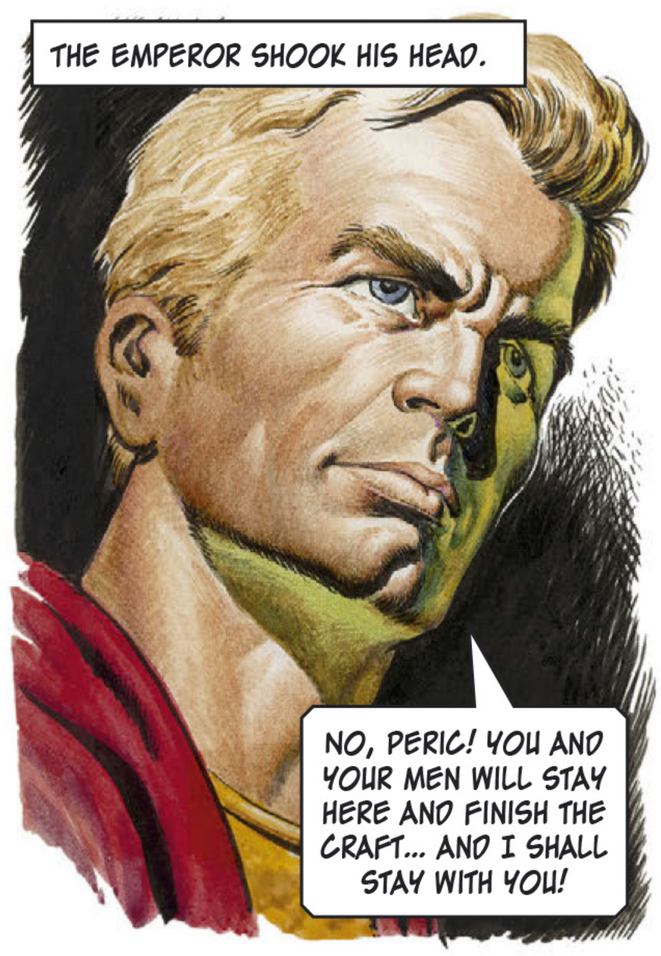
IT'S BEGUN! *THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL ELEKTON!*

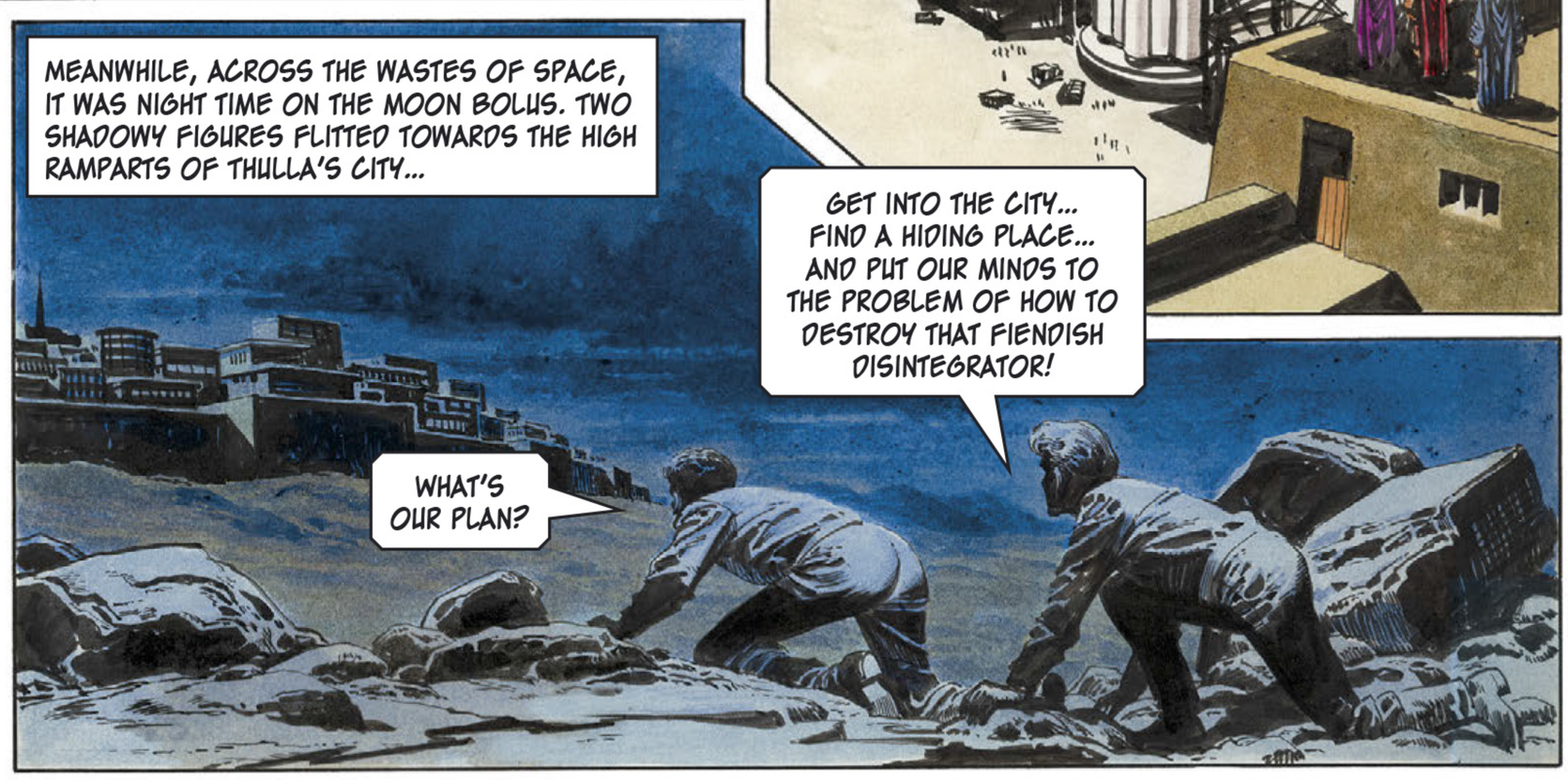
...AND THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO TO STOP IT!

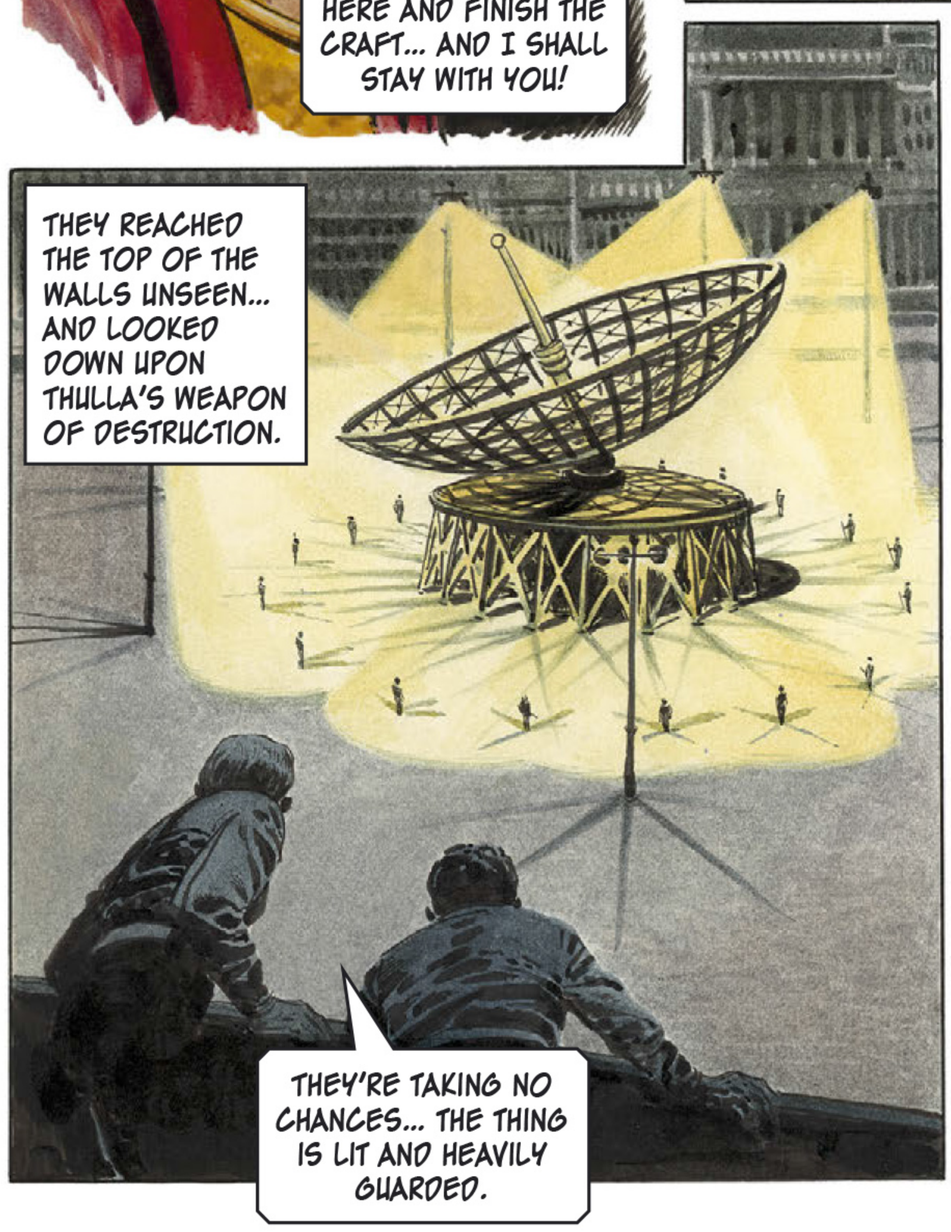
IT CAME SUDDENLY AND WITHOUT WARNING... PEOPLE IN THE STREETS OF TRIGAN CITY FELT THE GROUND TREMBLE BENEATH THEIR FEET... AND A CONE OF LURID GREEN LIGHT DAZZLED THEIR EYES!
AAAAAAAH! WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHAT'S HAPPENING?
IN THE GREAT HALL OF THE PALACE, THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS FEASTING WITH HIS CAPTAINS. THE SHOCK WAVE SENT THEM SPRAWLING TO THE FLOOR AMIDST THE RUINS OF THEIR MEAL.
AAAAAGH!
BY THE STARS!
THEY CLAWED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE DEBRIS AND STARED OUT OF THE WINDOW TO SEE THE TERRIFYING GREEN SHAPE IN THE SKY.
IT IS A CATACLYSM... SOMEWHERE OUT ON THE PLAIN OF VORG!
THE MARK OF THE CATACLYSM!
WITHIN A SHORT WHILE, THE GREEN LIGHT HAD DISAPPEARED AND TRIGO ORDERED A RECONNAISSANCE. THE EMPEROR HIMSELF WAS IN THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT THAT SIGHTED THE GREAT CIRCLE OF DESTRUCTION ON THE PLAIN BELOW.
THEY LANDED IN THE BLACKENED CIRCLE, AND STARED ABOUT THEM IN ALARM.
OLD PERIC WAS THE GREATEST SCIENTIST ON ELEKTON. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD GRIMLY.
SUCH A CATACLYSM IS UNKNOWN TO NATURAL SCIENCE... I CAN ONLY DEDUCE, THEREFORE, THAT IT WAS SOME FORM OF ATTACK!
THE VERY GROUND IS BURNT TO ASH!
BUT WHAT CAUSED IT, PERIC?
AN ATTACK? BUT... FROM WHERE?
PERIC HAD NO ANSWER TO THE EMPEROR'S QUESTION... BUT...
IF IT WAS AN ATTACK, IT COULD HAPPEN AGAIN!
THEN I MUST TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS TO PROTECT MY PEOPLE!


WITHIN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME, ORDERS WERE FLASHED TO THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE SPRAWLING EMPIRE AND WHOLE POPULATIONS BEGAN TO MOVE. TRIGO WATCHED THE GREAT EXODUS FROM TRIGAN CITY.
THE PEOPLE MUST SPREAD OUT AS THINLY AS POSSIBLE ACROSS THE WHOLE EMPIRE SO THAT, IF THE CATACLYSM STRIKES AGAIN, THERE WILL BE FEWER CASUALTIES.

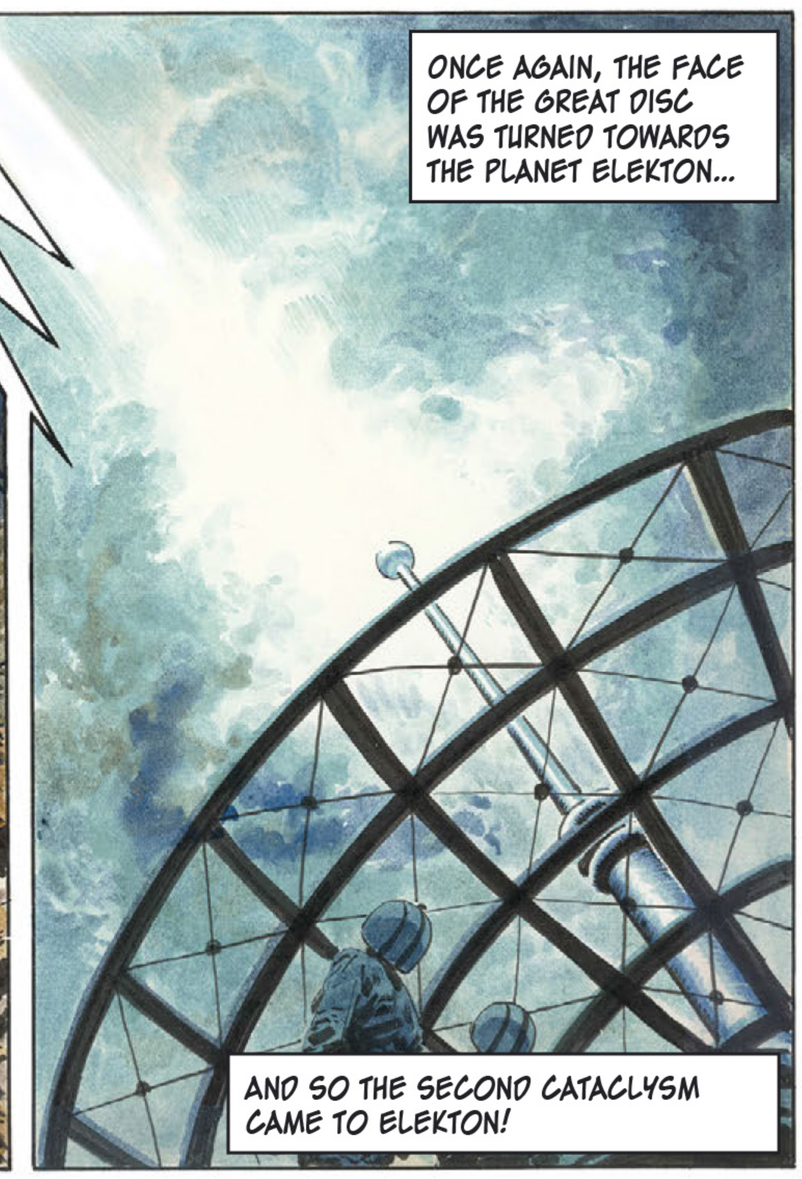

PERIC POINTED TO THE GLEAMING CYLINDER OF METAL OUTSIDE THE CITY WALLS.
AND WHAT OF THE CRAFT YOU ORDERED ME TO BUILD FOR THE JOURNEY TO BOLUS? IS THE WORK TO BE ABANDONED?

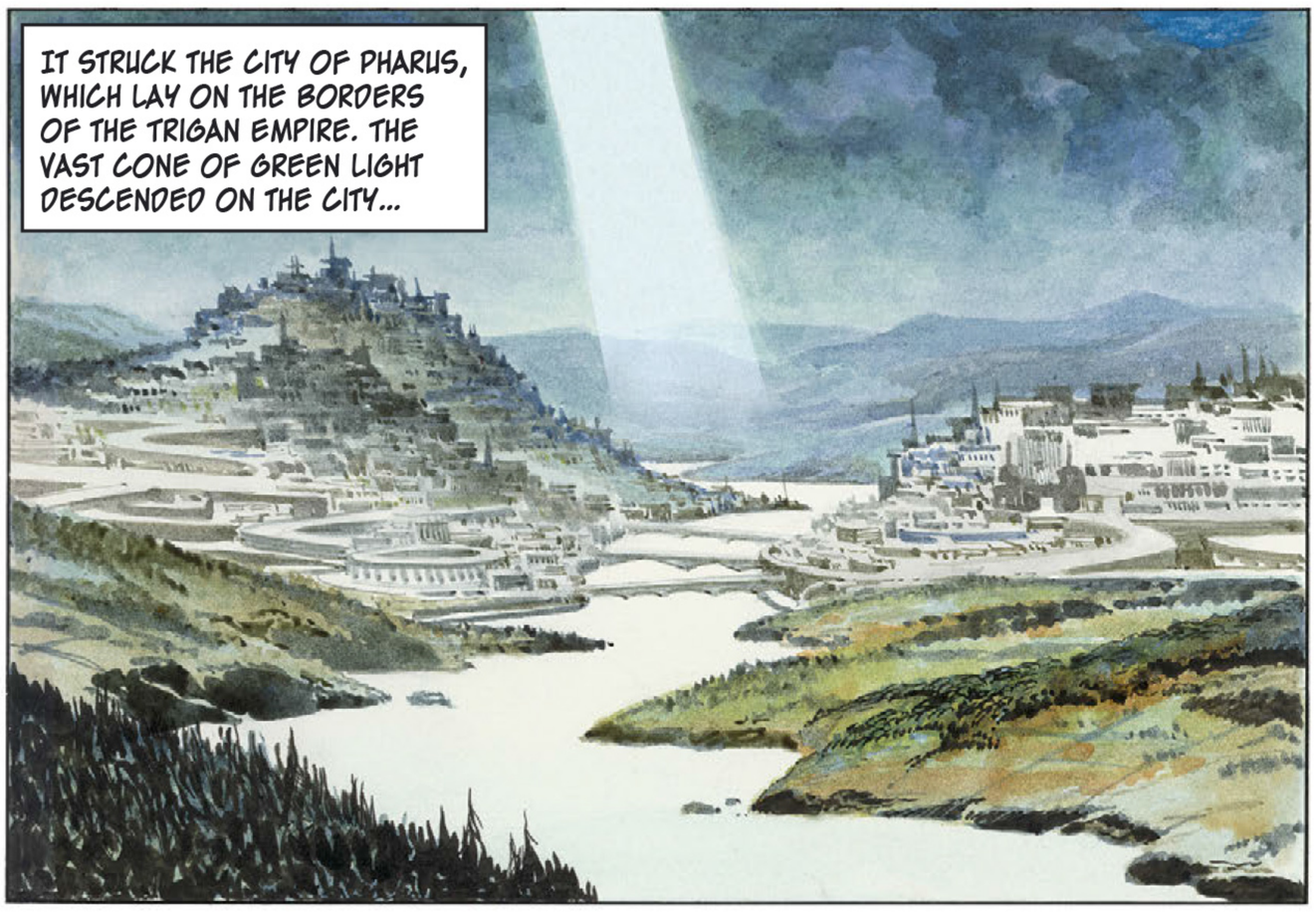

THE EMPEROR SHOOK HIS HEAD.
NO, PERIC! YOU AND YOUR MEN WILL STAY HERE AND FINISH THE CRAFT... AND I SHALL STAY WITH YOU!


MEANWHILE, ACROSS THE WASTES OF SPACE, IT WAS NIGHT TIME ON THE MOON BOLUS. TWO SHADOWY FIGURES FLITTED TOWARDS THE HIGH RAMPARTS OF THULLA'S CITY...
GET INTO THE CITY... FIND A HIDING PLACE... AND PUT OUR MINDS TO THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO DESTROY THAT FIENDISH DISINTEGRATOR!
WHAT'S OUR PLAN?


THEY REACHED THE TOP OF THE WALLS UNSEEN... AND LOOKED DOWN UPON THULLA'S WEAPON OF DESTRUCTION.
THEY'RE TAKING NO CHANCES... THE THING IS LIT AND HEAVILY GUARDED.

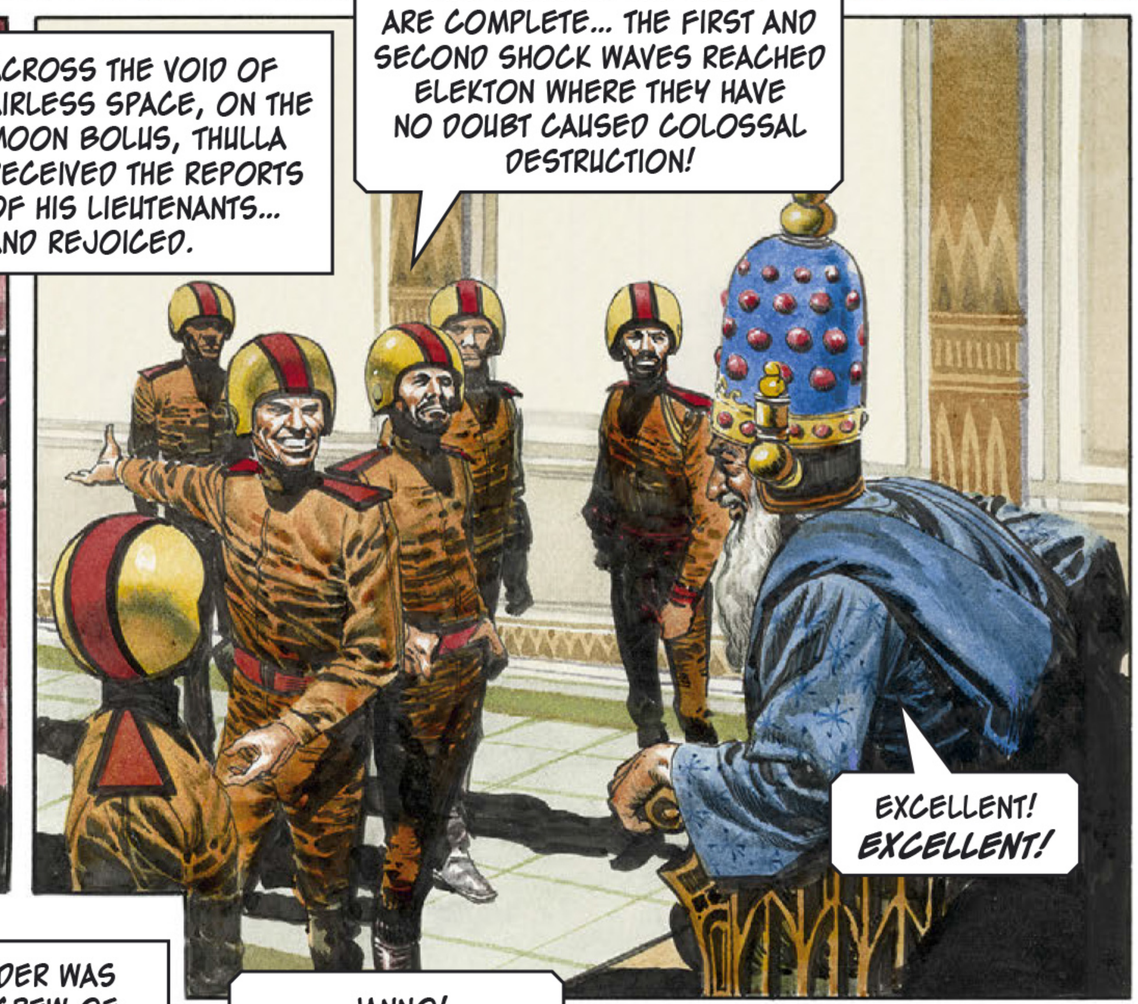
DAWN FOUND THE TWO COMRADES WATCHING FROM A RUINED BUILDING ACROSS THE SQUARE.
LOOK! THEY'RE GOING TO OPERATE THE DISINTEGRATOR AGAIN!
THE DEMONS!


ONCE AGAIN, THE FACE OF THE GREAT DISC WAS TURNED TOWARDS THE PLANET ELEKTON...
AND SO THE SECOND CATACLYSM CAME TO ELEKTON!


IT STRUCK THE CITY OF PHARUS, WHICH LAY ON THE BORDERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. THE VAST CONE OF GREEN LIGHT DESCENDED ON THE CITY...

BY ORDER OF THE EMPEROR, PHARUS WAS DESERTED AND ITS INHABITANTS SPREAD FAR AND WIDE FOR SAFETY. A SMALL GROUP OF THEM SAW IT ALL FROM A DISTANT HILLCREST...
AAAAAAAH! LOOK!
NO!... NO!

THEY SAW THEIR CITY DISAPPEAR IN A GREAT CIRCLE OF BLACKENED ASH!


ACROSS THE VOID OF AIRLESS SPACE, ON THE MOON BOLUS, THULLA RECEIVED THE REPORTS OF HIS LIEUTENANTS... AND REJOICED.
ALL-HIGHEST! THE TESTS ARE COMPLETE... THE FIRST AND SECOND SHOCK WAVES REACHED ELEKTON WHERE THEY HAVE NO DOUBT CAUSED COLOSSAL DESTRUCTION!
EXCELLENT! EXCELLENT!

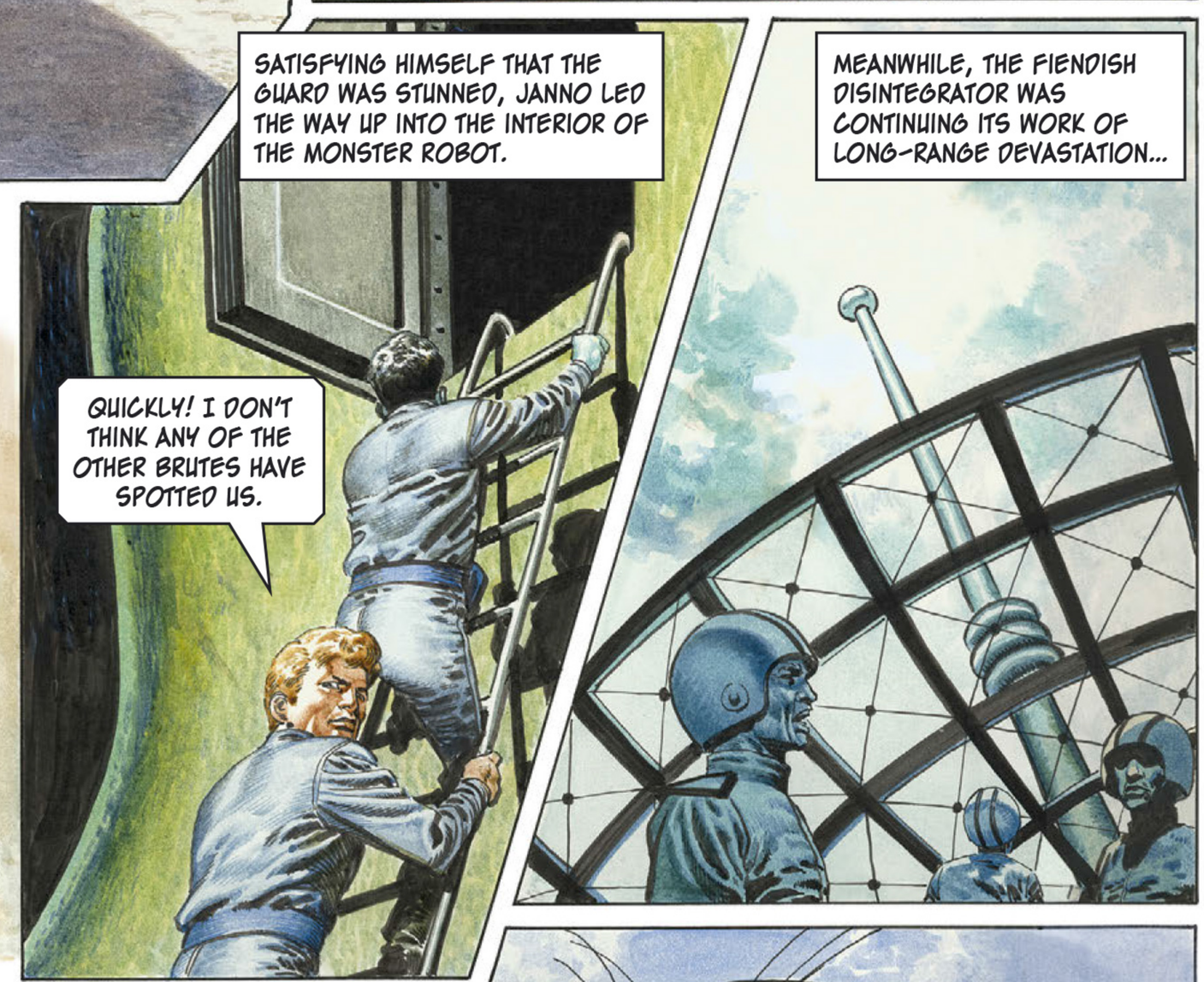
THE SELF-STYLED LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH POINTED...
CONTINUE THE SHOCK WAVES DAY AND NIGHT... TILL THE WHOLE SURFACE OF ELEKTON LIES IN ASHES!

THE FATEFUL ORDER WAS PASSED TO THE CREW OF THE DISINTEGRATOR, AND AGAIN THE GREEN LIGHT STABBED UP INTO THE SKY!

JANNO! THEY'RE DESTROYING ELEKTON AND EVERYTHING WE HOLD DEAR... WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM!
JANNO AND KEREN WATCHED IT ALL FROM THEIR HIDING PLACE...
BY THE STARS! I THINK I KNOW HOW WE CAN DO IT!

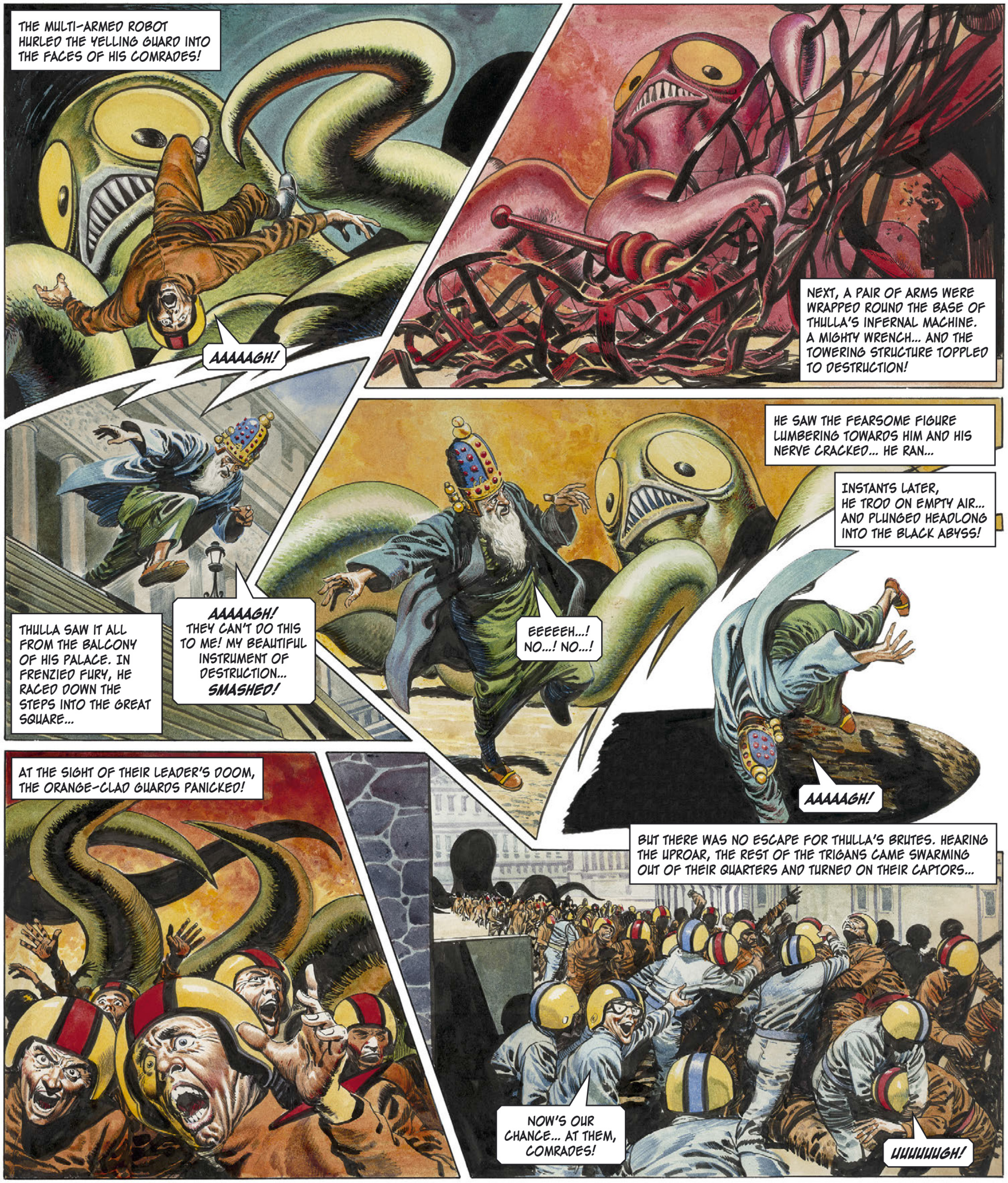
IN A CORNER OF THE GREAT SQUARE STOOD THE TWO MONSTROUS FIGURES WITH WHICH THE GOLDEN-HAIRED NATIVE INHABITANTS OF BOLUS HAD HOPED TO PROTECT THEMSELVES. IT WAS TOWARDS THE ABANDONED ROBOTS THAT JANNO AND KEREN CREPT CAUTIOUSLY...
...DISASTER WAS AVERTED. JANNO'S FLYING FORM BROUGHT THE GUARD CRASHING TO THE GROUND!

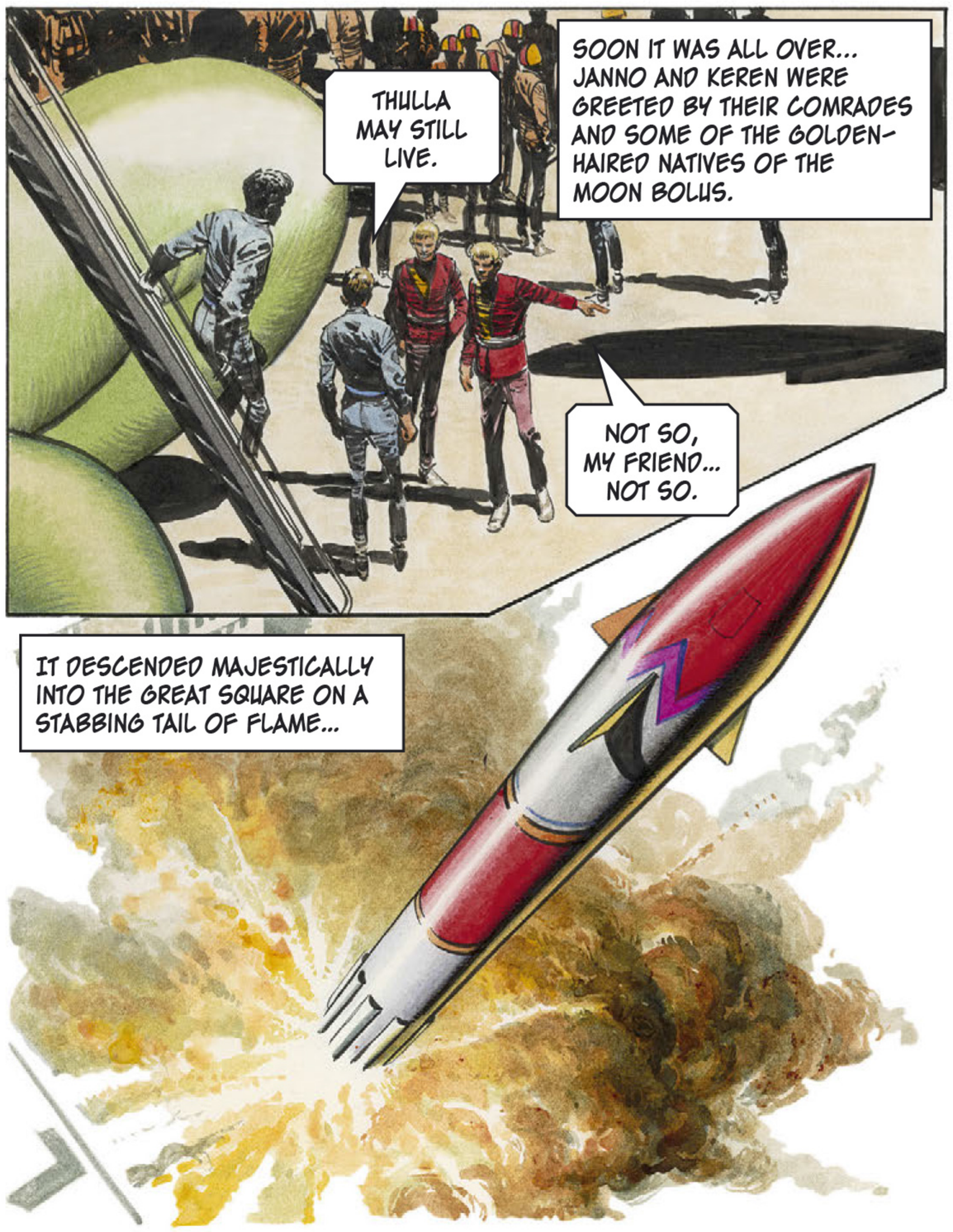
BUT THEN...
HEY!


SATISFYING HIMSELF THAT THE GUARD WAS STUNNED, JANNO LED THE WAY UP INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE MONSTER ROBOT.
QUICKLY! I DON'T THINK ANY OF THE OTHER BRUTES HAVE SPOTTED US.
MEANWHILE, THE FIENDISH DISINTEGRATOR WAS CONTINUING ITS WORK OF LONG-RANGE DEVASTATION...

AND THEN...
EEEEEEH!

...IT HAPPENED!


THE MULTI-ARMED ROBOT HURLED THE YELLING GUARD INTO THE FACES OF HIS COMRADES!
AAAAAGH!
NEXT, A PAIR OF ARMS WERE WRAPPED ROUND THE BASE OF THULLA'S INFERNAL MACHINE. A MIGHTY WRENCH... AND THE TOWERING STRUCTURE TOPPLED TO DESTRUCTION!
HE SAW THE FEARSOME FIGURE LUMBERING TOWARDS HIM AND HIS NERVE CRACKED... HE RAN...
INSTANTS LATER, HE TROD ON EMPTY AIR... AND PLUNGED HEADLONG INTO THE BLACK ABYSS!
THULLA SAW IT ALL FROM THE BALCONY OF HIS PALACE. IN FRENZIED FURY, HE RACED DOWN THE STEPS INTO THE GREAT SQUARE...
AAAAAGH! THEY CAN'T DO THIS TO ME! MY BEAUTIFUL INSTRUMENT OF DESTRUCTION... SMASHED!
EEEEEH...! NO...! NO...!
AAAAAGH!
AT THE SIGHT OF THEIR LEADER'S DOOM, THE ORANGE-CLAD GUARDS PANICKED!
BUT THERE WAS NO ESCAPE FOR THULLA'S BRUTES. HEARING THE UPROAR, THE REST OF THE TRIGANS CAME SWARMING OUT OF THEIR QUARTERS AND TURNED ON THEIR CAPTORS...
NOW'S OUR CHANCE... AT THEM, COMRADES!
UHUHUHUGH!


THULLA MAY STILL LIVE.
SOON IT WAS ALL OVER... JANNO AND KEREN WERE GREETED BY THEIR COMRADES AND SOME OF THE GOLDEN-HAIRED NATIVES OF THE MOON BOLUS.
NOT SO, MY FRIEND... NOT SO.
IT DESCENDED MAJESTICALLY INTO THE GREAT SQUARE ON A STABBING TAIL OF FLAME...

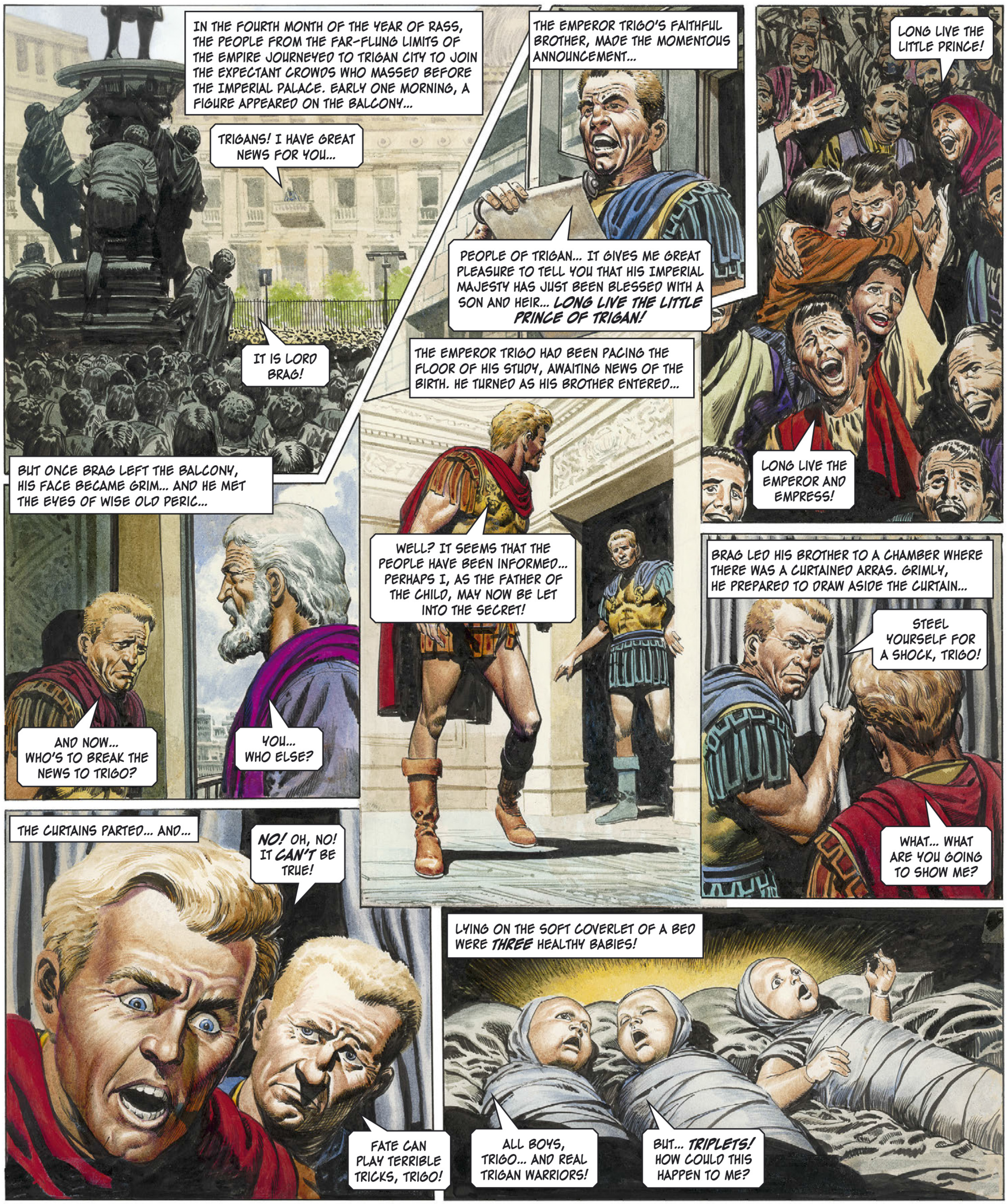
BUT... WE FELL DOWN THE PIT... AND LIVED!
YOU FELL WHEN THE TIDE OF THE INLAND SEA WAS AT ITS HIGHEST AND SO SURVIVED. AT THIS HOUR, THE TIDE IS LOW... AND THE EVIL ONE HAS INDEED FALLEN TO THE CENTRE OF BOLUS!
THE LONG MONTHS PASSED... AND THE TRIGANS LABOURED WITH THE GOLDEN-HAIRED ONES TO REBUILD THE CITY. THEY BECAME ALMOST HAPPY WITH THEIR LOT. THEN... ONE DAY...
LOOK! LOOK!
BY THE STARS!
THE DOORS OPENED... AND THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS SET FOOT ON BOLUS!
UNCLE TRIGO! WE MIGHT HAVE KNOWN YOU'D FIND US!
SOON, THEY COULD RETURN TO THEIR BELOVED ELEKTON. IT WAS THE END OF A GREAT ADVENTURE!

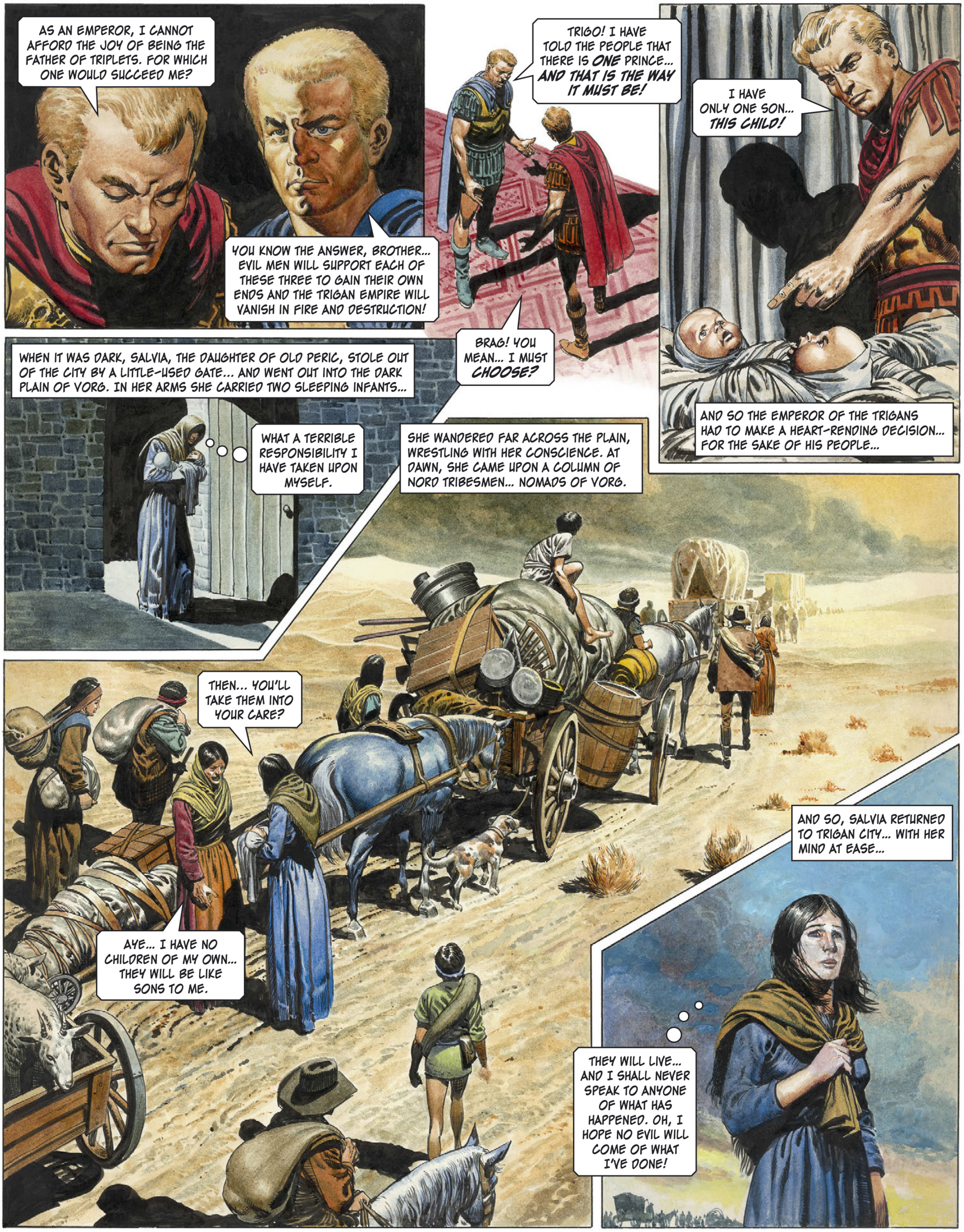
COMING SOON IN

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

Volume II

(available November 2020)


IN THE FOURTH MONTH OF THE YEAR OF RASS, THE PEOPLE FROM THE FAR-FLUNG LIMITS OF THE EMPIRE JOURNEYED TO TRIGAN CITY TO JOIN THE EXPECTANT CROWDS WHO MASSED BEFORE THE IMPERIAL PALACE. EARLY ONE MORNING, A FIGURE APPEARED ON THE BALCONY...
TRIGANS! I HAVE GREAT NEWS FOR YOU...
IT IS LORD BRAG!
BUT ONCE BRAG LEFT THE BALCONY, HIS FACE BECAME GRIM... AND HE MET THE EYES OF WISE OLD PERIC...
AND NOW... WHO'S TO BREAK THE NEWS TO TRIGO?
YOU... WHO ELSE?
THE CURTAINS PARTED... AND...
NO! OH, NO! IT CAN'T BE TRUE!
FATE CAN PLAY TERRIBLE TRICKS, TRIGO!
THE EMPEROR TRIGO'S FAITHFUL BROTHER, MADE THE MOMENTOUS ANNOUNCEMENT...
PEOPLE OF TRIGAN... IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO TELL YOU THAT HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY HAS JUST BEEN BLESSED WITH A SON AND HEIR... LONG LIVE THE LITTLE PRINCE OF TRIGAN!
THE EMPEROR TRIGO HAD BEEN PACING THE FLOOR OF HIS STUDY, AWAITING NEWS OF THE BIRTH. HE TURNED AS HIS BROTHER ENTERED...
WELL? IT SEEMS THAT THE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INFORMED... PERHAPS I, AS THE FATHER OF THE CHILD, MAY NOW BE LET INTO THE SECRET!
LONG LIVE THE LITTLE PRINCE!
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR AND EMPRESS!
BRAG LED HIS BROTHER TO A CHAMBER WHERE THERE WAS A CURTAINED ARRAS. GRIMLY, HE PREPARED TO DRAW ASIDE THE CURTAIN...
STEEL YOURSELF FOR A SHOCK, TRIGO!
WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO SHOW ME?
LYING ON THE SOFT COVERLET OF A BED WERE THREE HEALTHY BABIES!
ALL BOYS, TRIGO... AND REAL TRIGAN WARRIORS!
BUT... TRIPLETS! HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN TO ME?


AS AN EMPEROR, I CANNOT AFFORD THE JOY OF BEING THE FATHER OF TRIPLETS. FOR WHICH ONE WOULD SUCCEED ME?
YOU KNOW THE ANSWER, BROTHER... EVIL MEN WILL SUPPORT EACH OF THESE THREE TO GAIN THEIR OWN ENDS AND THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WILL VANISH IN FIRE AND DESTRUCTION!
TRIGO! I HAVE TOLD THE PEOPLE THAT THERE IS ONE PRINCE... AND THAT IS THE WAY IT MUST BE!
BRAG! YOU MEAN... I MUST CHOOSE?
I HAVE ONLY ONE SON... THIS CHILD!
AND SO THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS HAD TO MAKE A HEART-RENDING DECISION... FOR THE SAKE OF HIS PEOPLE...
WHEN IT WAS DARK, SALVIA, THE DAUGHTER OF OLD PERIC, STOLE OUT OF THE CITY BY A LITTLE-USED GATE... AND WENT OUT INTO THE DARK PLAIN OF VORG. IN HER ARMS SHE CARRIED TWO SLEEPING INFANTS...
WHAT A TERRIBLE RESPONSIBILITY I HAVE TAKEN UPON MYSELF.
SHE WANDERED FAR ACROSS THE PLAIN, WRESTLING WITH HER CONSCIENCE. AT DAWN, SHE CAME UPON A COLUMN OF NORD TRIBESMEN... NOMADS OF VORG.
THEN... YOU'LL TAKE THEM INTO YOUR CARE?
AYE... I HAVE NO CHILDREN OF MY OWN... THEY WILL BE LIKE SONS TO ME.
AND SO, SALVIA RETURNED TO TRIGAN CITY... WITH HER MIND AT EASE...
THEY WILL LIVE... AND I SHALL NEVER SPEAK TO ANYONE OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED. OH, I HOPE NO EVIL WILL COME OF WHAT I'VE DONE!

YEARS LATER, A STRANGE CRAFT FROM A FAR-DISTANT GALAXY PASSED CLOSE TO THE PLANET ELEKTON...

AND THEN – DISASTER! THE CRAFT WAS STRUCK BY A GIANT METEORITE!

ONE MAN SURVIVED THE CALAMITY AND EJECTED HIMSELF FROM THE DOOMED CRAFT... TOWARDS THE ATMOSPHERE OF ELEKTON.

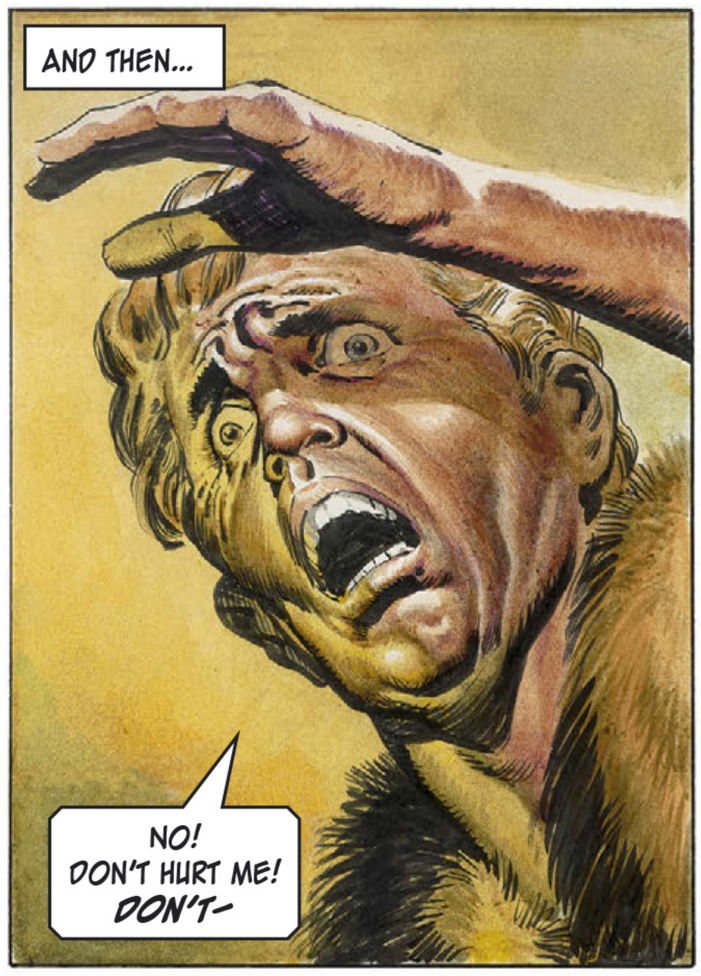
THE ALIEN ESCAPE CAPSULE CAME TO REST ON THE PLAIN OF VORG, IN THE TRIGAN EMPIRE...

HOODED, DARK EYES SCANNED THE EMPTY HORIZON. THE PEOPLE OF THAT DISTANT GALAXY WERE OF A FANTASTICALLY SUPERIOR INTELLIGENCE AND THEIR MINDS WERE DRIVEN BY ONE FORCE... ***EVIL!***

SO, I AM DOOMED TO REMAIN FOR EVER ON THIS ACCURSED PLANET. THEN I MUST MAKE IT MINE... ***ALL MINE!***

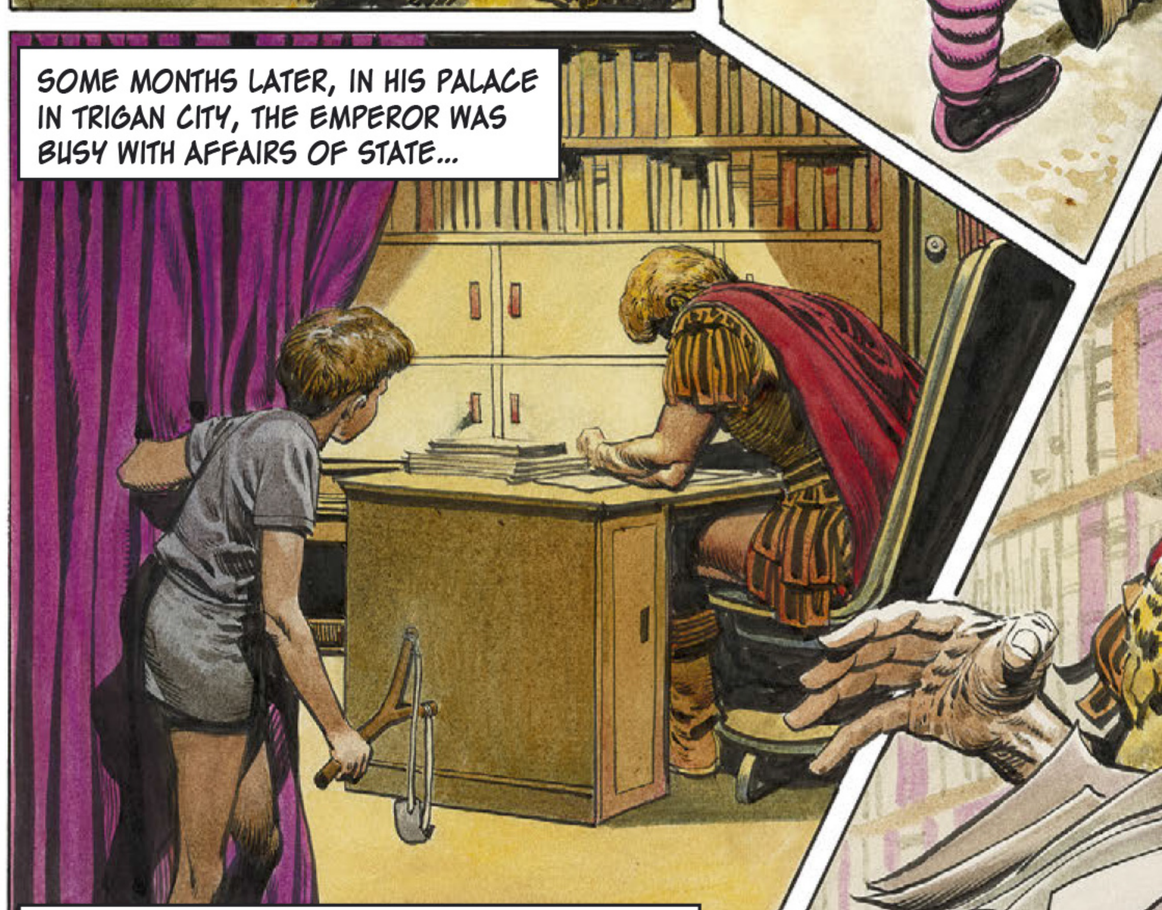
SOME DAYS LATER, A WANDERING VORG HUNTER WAS PREPARING HIS SIMPLE MEAL WHEN HE SAW THE STRANGER APPROACHING...

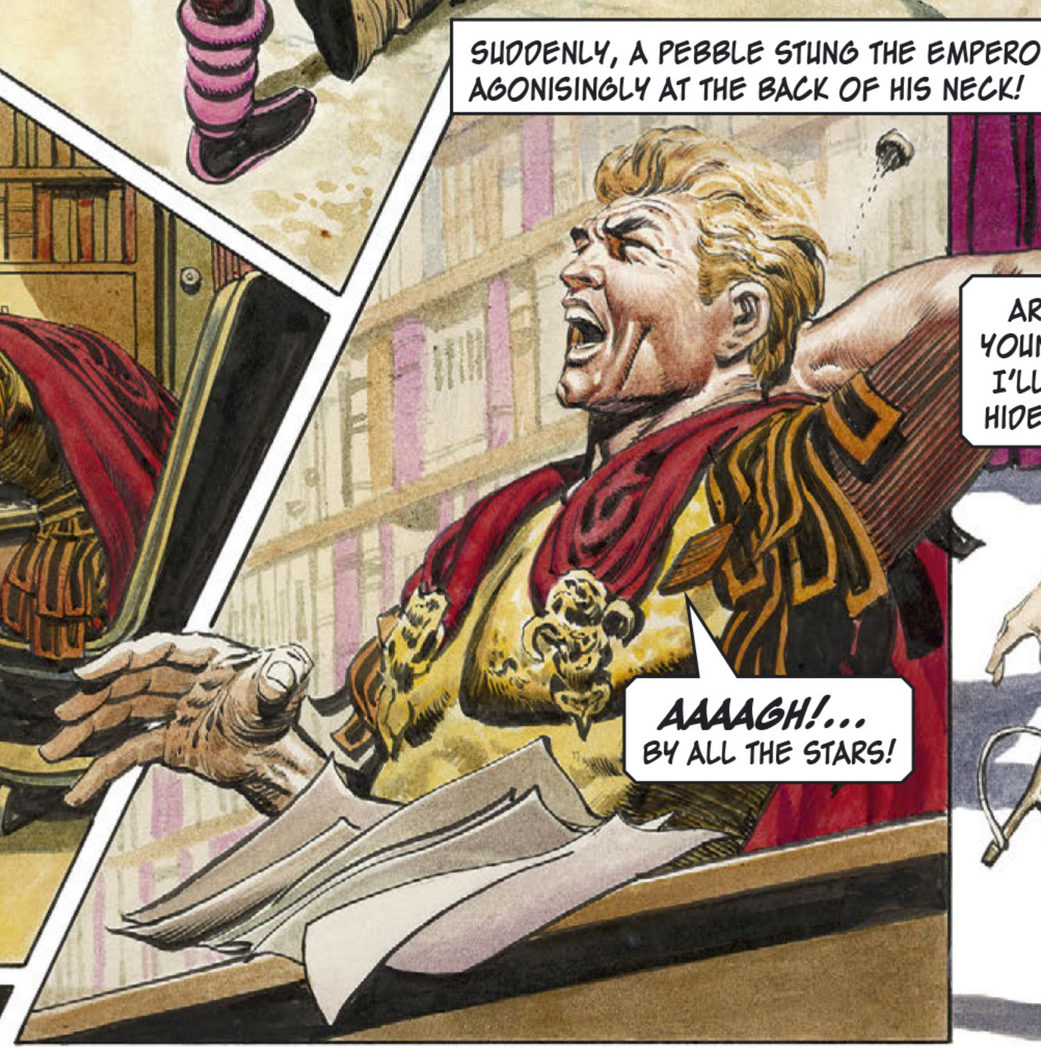
WHO ARE YOU?


AND THEN...
NO! DON'T HURT ME! DON'T-

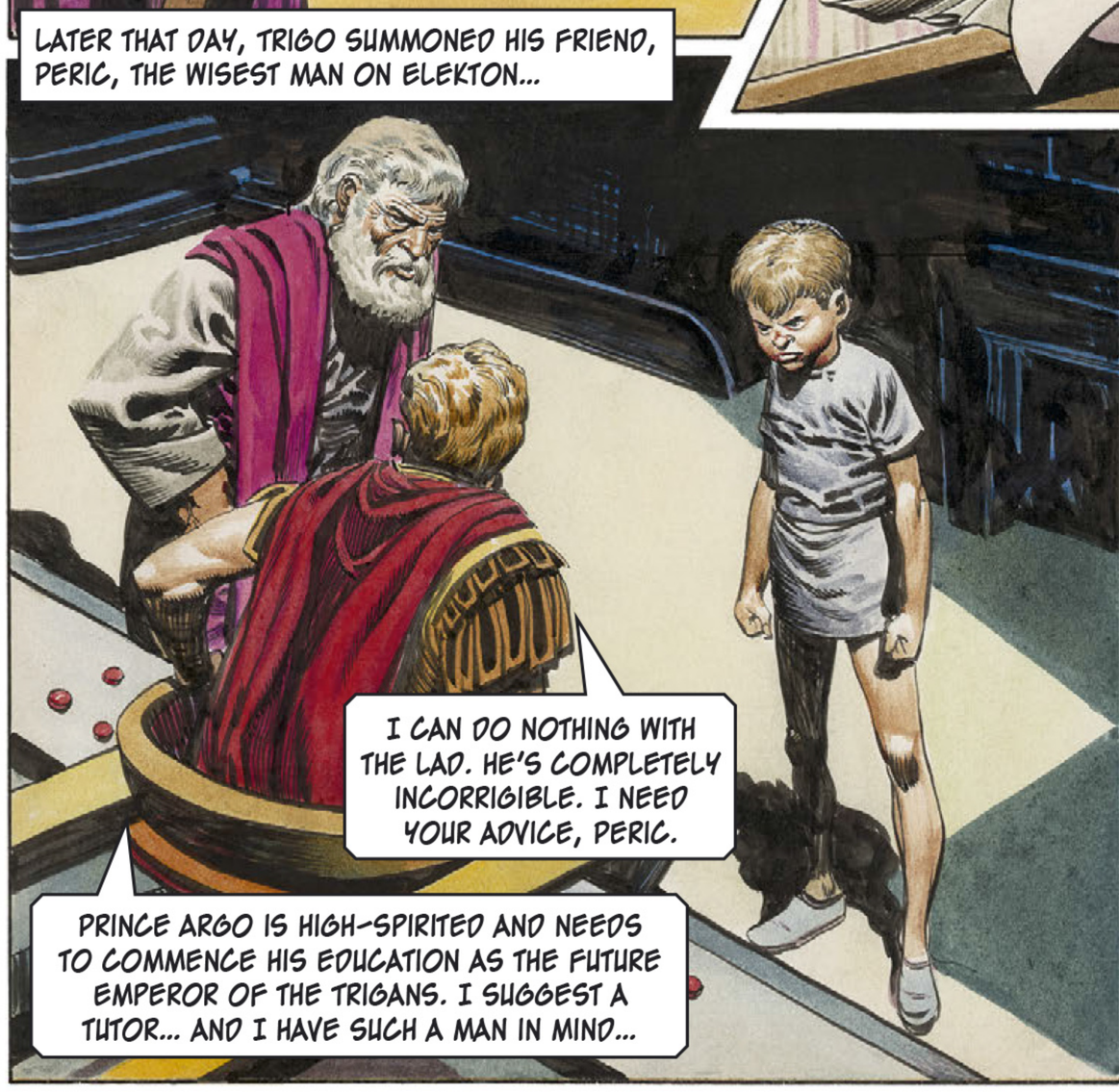
THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE OF THE ALIEN GALAXY LAY IN THEIR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE BY TELEPATHY. THE MIND OF THE TERRIFIED HUNTER WAS BOMBARDED BY QUESTIONS...
YOU WILL TELL ME ALL I NEED TO KNOW... WHAT IS THIS PLACE? WHO ARE ITS PEOPLE? ITS RULERS? TELL ME EVERYTHING!

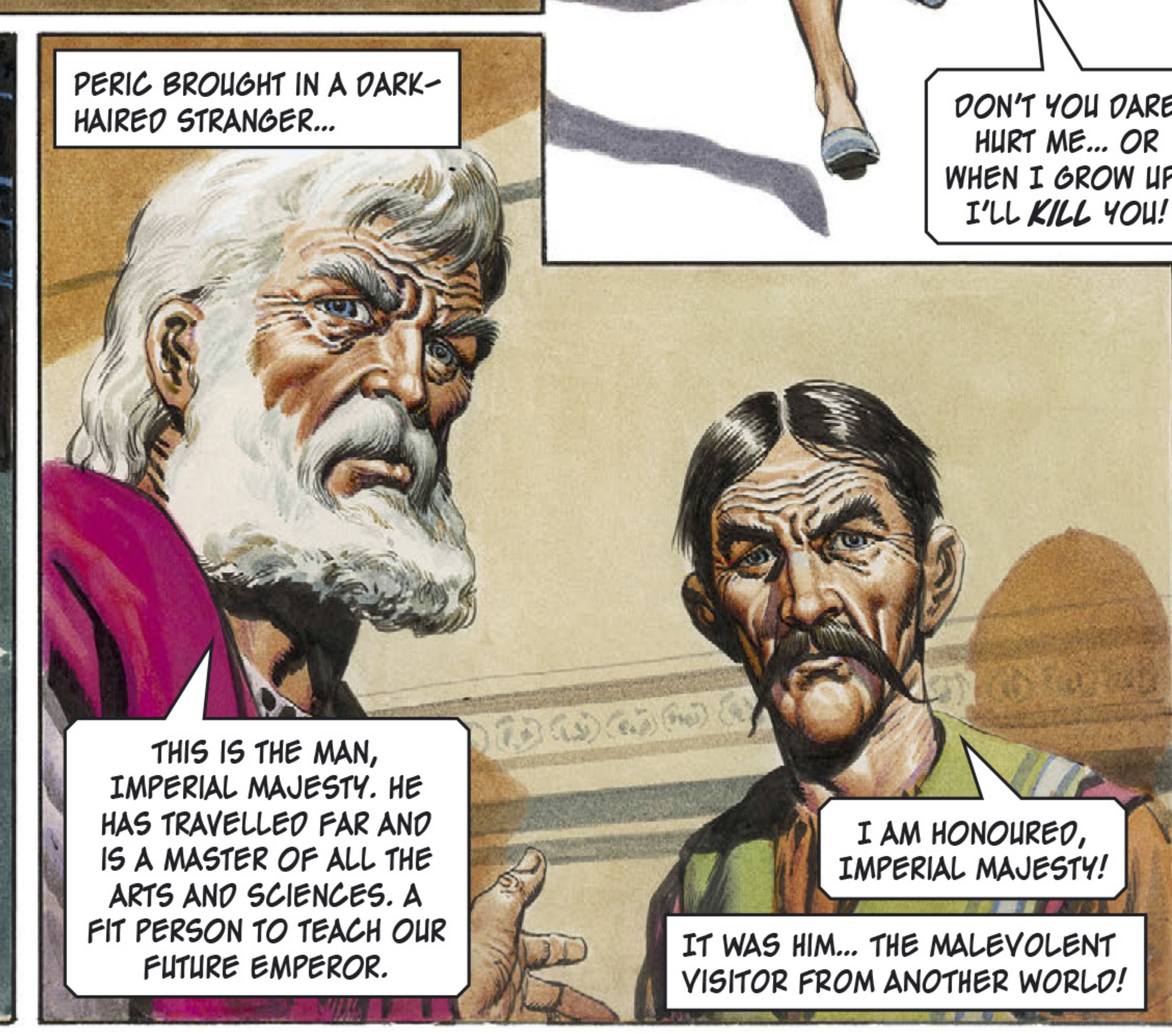
THE WRETCHED HUNTER BABBLED... EVERYTHING.
THIS IS THE PLAIN OF VORG... PART OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, RULED BY THE EMPEROR TRIGO... HE HAS ONE SON, A CHILD CALLED PRINCE ARGO...


SOME MONTHS LATER, IN HIS PALACE IN TRIGAN CITY, THE EMPEROR WAS BUSY WITH AFFAIRS OF STATE...


SUDDENLY, A PEBBLE STUNG THE EMPEROR AGONISINGLY AT THE BACK OF HIS NECK!
AAAAGH!... BY ALL THE STARS!

ARGO, YOU YOUNG DEMON! I'LL HAVE THE HIDE OFF YOU!
DON'T YOU DARE HURT ME... OR WHEN I GROW UP, I'LL KILL YOU!


LATER THAT DAY, TRIGO SUMMONED HIS FRIEND, PERIC, THE WISEST MAN ON ELEKTON...
I CAN DO NOTHING WITH THE LAD. HE'S COMPLETELY INCORRIGIBLE. I NEED YOUR ADVICE, PERIC.
PRINCE ARGO IS HIGH-SPIRITED AND NEEDS TO COMMENCE HIS EDUCATION AS THE FUTURE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS. I SUGGEST A TUTOR... AND I HAVE SUCH A MAN IN MIND...


PERIC BROUGHT IN A DARK-HAIRED STRANGER...
THIS IS THE MAN, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. HE HAS TRAVELLED FAR AND IS A MASTER OF ALL THE ARTS AND SCIENCES. A FIT PERSON TO TEACH OUR FUTURE EMPEROR.
I AM HONOURED, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
IT WAS HIM... THE MALEVOLENT VISITOR FROM ANOTHER WORLD!

TEN YEARS PASSED... ONE DAY, THE THUNDER OF POUNDING HOOVES RESOUNDED IN THE ARENA AT TRIGAN CITY... AND A WHOOPING BOY RODE HIS KREED STRAIGHT AT A REARING ZARGOT.
DUCKING THE SWEEP OF THE SHARP TALONS, THE BOY DROVE HIS HUNTING SPEAR FORWARD... AND THE GREAT BEAST FELL.
BRAG HAD WATCHED THE THRILLING ENCOUNTER. HE TURNED WITH A START AS HIS BROTHER TRIGO APPEARED.
HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES... ALLOWING THE HEIR TO THE IMPERIAL THRONE TO RISK HIS LIFE LIKE THAT?
FAITHFUL BRAG EYED THE EMPEROR KEENLY.
WE BOTH HUNTED THE ZARGOT AT HIS AGE... AND WE LIVED TO BUILD THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT, BRAG. AN EMPEROR MUST KNOW HOW TO RISK HIS LIFE!
THE BROTHERS WERE JOINED BY THE YOUNG PRINCE... AND HIS TUTOR.
I HEAR THAT THE PRINCE IS ALSO BRILLIANT AT HIS SCHOOL WORK, THRINGA... AND WE HAVE YOU TO THANK FOR THAT.
HIS HIGHNESS IS A GOOD PUPIL, IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
THE MAN WHO CALLED HIMSELF THRINGA GAVE A THIN SMILE.
THIS, THEN, WAS THE PATTERN OF THE YOUNG PRINCE'S LIFE... LESSONS IN THE WARLIKE ARTS FROM HIS UNCLE, SCHOOL WORK FROM THRINGA AND ROFFA TAUGHT HIM TO FLY...
TAKE OVER... SHE'S ALL YOURS!
WITH ARGO AT THE CONTROLS, THE CRAFT NOSED INTO A SCREAMING DIVE...
STEADY! DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID, YOU YOUNG HOTHEAD!

ROFFA SAW THEIR PERIL...

LOOK OUT... YOU'LL KILL US BOTH!

ROFFA COVERED HIS EYES... AND IT WAS ALL OVER...

ROFFA'S LEGS WERE STILL TREMBLING WHEN HE CLAWED HIS WAY OUT OF THE CRAFT BACK AT THE AIR FIELD.

WELL? AM I SKILFUL ENOUGH TO GO ON MY OWN?

YOU'LL BE THE FINEST PILOT IN THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET ONE DAY... IF YOU DON'T KILL YOURSELF FIRST!

LATER THAT DAY, PRINCE ARGO REPORTED TO HIS TUTOR.

AAAAH... READY FOR YOUR LESSON, YOUR HIGHNESS?

YES, SIR.

MOMENTS LATER, THE MAN FROM THE ALIEN GALAXY BROUGHT HIS STRANGE POWERS TO BEAR ON THE MIND OF THE YOUNG BOY...

ALL I HAVE TAUGHT YOU IS DIRECTED TO ONE END... NOW – TELL ME WHAT YOU ARE SOON TO DO...

I AM TO SLAY MY FATHER AND BECOME EMPEROR... AND THEN YOU WILL BE MY MASTER AND MASTER OF THE EMPIRE!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MIKE BUTTERWORTH

Mike Butterworth is primarily known in comic circles as the writer of *The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire*, but had previously written *Battler Briton* and *Buffalo Bill* strips for **Comet**, for **Sun** he wrote *Max Bravo, The Happy Hussar* and *Billy the Kid* (which was drawn by, amongst others, Don Lawrence). *The Trigan Empire* began in 1965 in **Ranger**, and continued when **Ranger** was absorbed into **Look and Learn** where it continued to be published through to 1982. From 1967 he also wrote crime novels under his full name, John Michael Butterworth, and gothic romances under the pseudonyms of Carola Salisbury and Sarah Kemp.

DON LAWRENCE

Don Lawrence was born in 1928, and worked for Mick Anglo on the **Marvelman** comic produced for Amalgamated Press, and then *Billy the Kid* in the comic **Sun**. When **Sun** was absorbed into **Lion** he moved on to illustrating *Olac the Gladiator, Karl the Viking* and *Maroc the Mighty*. In 1965 he teamed with Mike Butterworth to create *The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire* for **Ranger** magazine, and continued to paint the comic through its transition into **Look and Learn** through to 1976. During this period he also worked on *Fireball XL5* and *The Adventures of Tarzan* comic strips for **TV Century 21**. After leaving *The Trigan Empire* he worked with a Dutch publisher to create **Storm**, a post-apocalypse sci-fi series, which he would draw through to his retirement in 1999.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

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